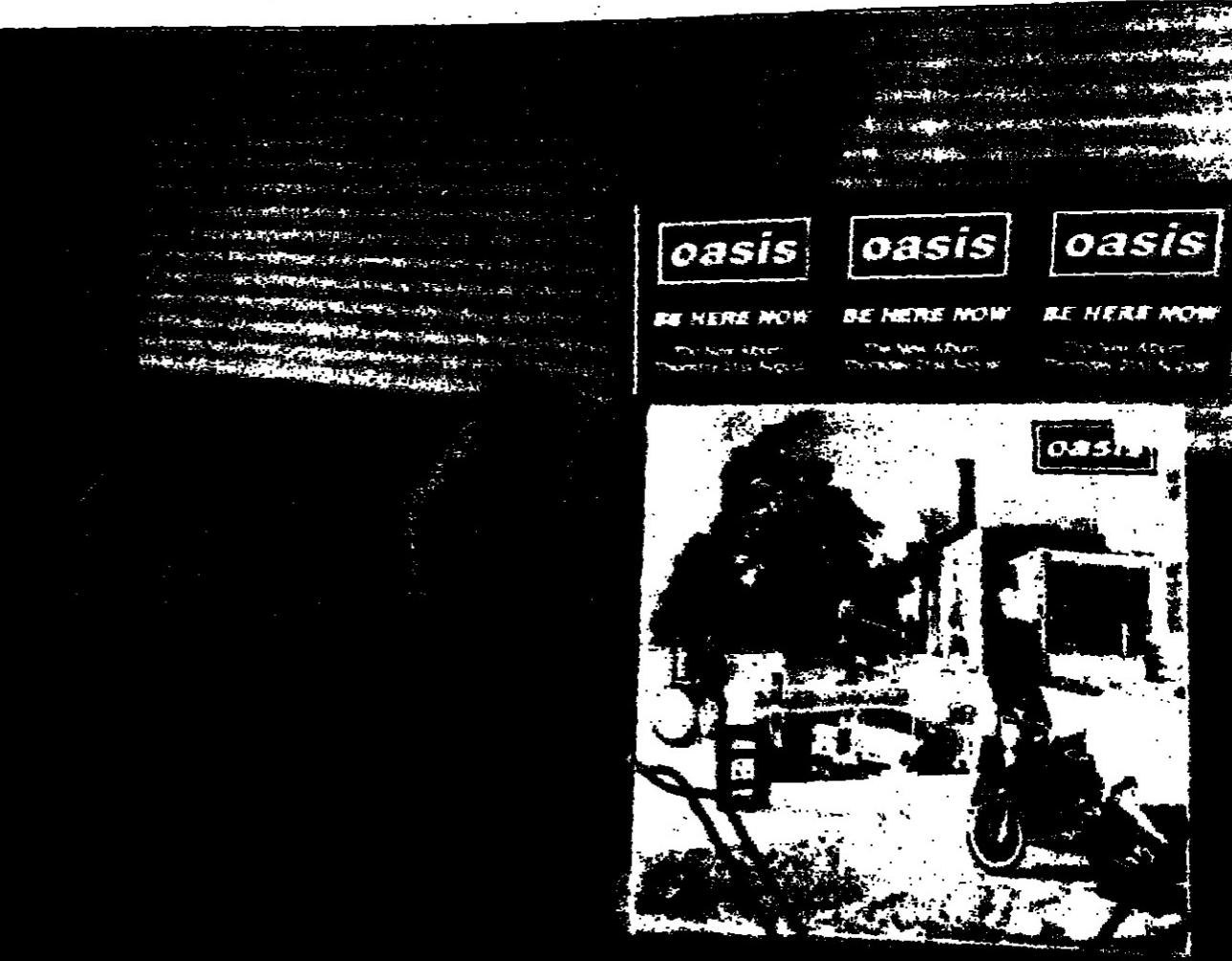


GCSE day of joy and tears, but for others there's a more important thing called Oasis



Making a dash for it: While many teenagers rushed to get their GCSE exam results yesterday (Photograph: Joan Russell/Guzelian), others were more keen to be among the first in queues at record shops to buy Oasis' third album, *Be Here Now*. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

'They yelled with delight, wept, and took long drags on cigarettes as they clutched the envelopes containing their scores'

Esther Leach

Pupils yelled with delight, some cried while others took long drags on cigarettes yesterday as they clutched the envelopes with their GCSE results at Lawrence School in Leeds.

Most of the results were good, about a dozen were outstanding, others were unexpectedly disappointing.

Pauline Horswill, the year head, had been prepared for anything. Her handwritten notices around the school hall told students not to leave without talking to a tutor about their results, good or bad.

"I'm rather like a mother hen, I'm afraid. But after spending five years with them you feel like you own them," she said.

"We are asking them to fill in a questionnaire about their

plans for the future. Even the successful ones can panic – they go through quite a bit of anxiety."

"There are teachers here to guide and advise students. There are bound to be disappointments, but on the whole most seem quite happy with what they've got."

Freyja Turk, 16, was more than happy with her grade A in drama, and a C in maths pleased her too.

"I want to be an actress, so I'm pleased with the grade A in drama, and the C in maths is quite a surprise. I'll go on to sixth form then hopefully university and then drama college after that."

The threat of student fees once she got to university didn't trouble her too much: "I'm fortunate, I suppose. My par-

ents are in a position to help me financially."

Daniel Hansbrough, 16, sat on a bench in the school hall, reading and re-reading his results. "I've got B in maths and B in science. I can't believe it. I wasn't expecting it, I also got C in business studies, though. But B in maths will be good for computer courses. I want to get into computers eventually. In the meantime I'll stay on here and go on to the sixth form."

His friend Paul Heselton, 16, was less certain about his future other than he wanted to leave school.

"I'm not so happy with my results – I got C in English and E in design. I want to do something in computers, but I won't stay here to do it. I think it's time for a change," he said.

The threat of student fees once she got to university didn't trouble her too much: "I'm fortunate, I suppose. My par-

ents are in a position to help me financially."

Meanwhile, the retiring head teacher, Clive Robinson, 53, looked on for the last time as the students collected their results. "We have had some very good results," he said holding a piece of paper listing at least a dozen students with up to eight passes, most of them with straight As.

"But there are those who didn't expect anything who have achieved something, and these are success stories too."

He said this year was not as good as the last two years at Lawrence, which has 1,540 students, aged from 11-18.

"Cohorts of children vary, teaching methods haven't changed, and I imagine the marking hasn't either."

"It's unrealistic to be great every year – there will always be ups and downs."

'I would rather buy the album first and then get my results. It's a matter of getting the good news before the bad'

Louise Hancock and Lucy McDonald

It was a question of getting your priorities right. Exam results could wait, but the Brothers Gallagher, apparently, could not.

Outside HMV in Guildford, Surrey, 16-year-old Sophie Harding was among the crowd of yawning youngsters which had queued to buy the new Oasis album yesterday morning, rather than rustling off to collect GCSE results.

"The launch of the new Oasis album is more important to me than my GCSEs – Oasis come first in everything," she said.

Another teenager, who had joined the line at 7.30am, summed up the feelings of many, saying: "I'd rather buy the album first and then get my results

are bad." And Nim Ilakavon said: "I'm here to escape pressure from my parents over exam results. It doesn't mean it's more important – it's just something you've got to do."

Tom Ellis, another GCSE student, said: "It's more important than anything. I mean, I wouldn't get up this early in the morning for anything else."

In the City, lawyers and bankers proved to be similarly committed, although the demands of work meant that many offices selected one unlucky person to queue for the album and buy in bulk.

Steve Brett, the manager of Virgin Bishopsgate, in the heart of the Square Mile, said: "Both Bishopsgate and Poultry stores sold 500 albums in the first hour – unheard of by City standards."

A spokesman for HMV predicted that it would have sold 50,000 copies by the end of the first day. Estimates for the weekend are as high as 500,000 copies nationwide, making it the fastest-selling UK album ever.

Kate Waterfall, of Virgin, said: "If we had closed our doors at 9am, the album would still have been the biggest seller this week. Stores across the UK and Ireland sold on average 9,000 copies an hour all day. A few stores have even sold out on the first day, which has never happened before."

The biggest-seller in its first week in the UK was *Thriller*, by Michael Jackson, at 375,000, while Oasis' last album, *(What's the Story) Morning Glory* sold 370,000 in its first week.

"*Be Here Now* will definitely beat that," said Ms Waterfall.

Vegetarian, 24, gets CJD

Charles Arthur Science Editor

A 24-year-old Kent woman, who was a strict vegetarian for the past 12 years, is the latest victim of the fatal "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), linked to "mad cow disease".

Clare Louise Tomkins, who is now being cared for at home by her parents, was diagnosed as having "v-CJD" this week by Professor John Collinge, an acknowledged expert in the field, after tissue tests at St Mary's Hospital in London. There have been 25 reported cases in Britain since this form of the disease was first identified in 1995, though the Government has only confirmed 21 so far.

It also enlarges an apparent

"cluster" of v-CJD cases around Ashford, Kent, where the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or "mad cow disease", was diagnosed in 1985. So far, four v-CJD victims have lived near Ashford. Tonbridge is about 25 miles away, and Miss Tomkins has lived there all her life, though she never worked on a farm.

Furthermore, her strict vegetarianism – inspired, her father said last night, by her love of animals – means that if she caught it by eating BSE-infected food, she was infected by eating contaminated food even before the disease had been formally identified. That, in turn, could mean that many more people may be infected than was thought. Her father, Roger,

said yesterday: "When we told doctors she had been a vegetarian since 1985, there were a few raised eyebrows. They were very, very surprised. They are in no doubt that she caught CJD from mechanically-recovered food eaten before 1985."

He told The Independent: "It is absolutely tragic. She's just turned 24. Our first knowledge about it was about October last year. She had lost a stone in weight. Her fiancé also told us that, for six months before that, her will to socialise had reduced."

Before becoming vegetarian, he said, "she just ate family food – from the supermarket or butchers. Just normal, average foods." She had not been a par-

ticularly heavy eater of meat. He noted that Clare was so strict that she would not eat foods containing gelatin or animal fats.

To date, about 161,000 BSE cases have been diagnosed, but an estimated 1 million BSE-infected cows have entered the food chain since 1985. Since 1989, the most infectious parts of cattle – such as the brains and spinal cord – have been banned from human consumption.

Clare is in the advanced stages of the disease, being fed through a tube direct into her stomach, and needs 24-hour nursing at her home. "A year ago she was looking forward to getting married and now she is slowly dying," said her mother yesterday.

McIntosh returns to National

Louise Jury

Genista McIntosh, the arts executive who dramatically quit the troubled Royal Opera House in May amid health fears, is to return to her previous post at the National Theatre.

She will be executive director alongside Trevor Nunn, when he takes over from Sir Richard Eyre as the theatre's director in October. The two spent 14 years working together at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford.

Announcing the appointment yesterday, Mr Nunn said he was delighted that Ms McIntosh would be with him to assist the changeover. "She was widely acknowledged as a brill-

iant executive director of the National from 1990-1996 and she and I worked closely together at the RSC from 1972 to 1986. So with certain knowledge, I can say this is a great day for me, for the National Theatre and theatre in this country."

Ms McIntosh said she was very pleased. "I feel very lucky. I wasn't expecting to be available so this was a most happy connection of circumstances."

She resigned as £100,000-a-year chief executive at the Royal Opera House in May after only four months. Ill health was given as the reason for her departure although attention also focused on the enormous difficulties of running the problem-plagued institution. At a

parliamentary select committee hearing last month, she said it was her unhappiness in the job that prompted her resignation, adding: "Had I continued I might well have become ill."

Yesterday she said she had no regrets about her stint at Covent Garden. "Experiences are never wasted. They can be difficult and they can be sometimes painful and upsetting, but there's always something learned and something gained."

Her return to the National Theatre comes as it, too, faces problems. It has £1.2m less to spend this year than five years ago because the Arts Council has been unable to increase its grant to keep pace with costs. Major building works are also under way.

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news

The heat is on and terrapins are going wild

Louise Hancock and Lucy McDonald

There are constant warnings about the dangers posed to the environment by global warming. But one danger that seems to have been overlooked until now is the threat of a terrapin population explosion.

Although they have been sighted in parkland during the current heatwave, one naturalist has predicted that wild terrapins could cause greater problems in the future.

Joe Pecorelli, of the London Aquarium, said: "If global warming continues, and temperatures rise in this country, then the terrapins will be able to breed more easily." The EU last month restricted the importation of terrapins after lobbying by environmental groups.

Concern first arose following the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles craze in the late Eighties when terrapin ownership increased dramatically with an estimated 8 million being imported into the



National nuisance: Terrapins such as this one in Roath Park, Cardiff, will breed quickly if global warming continues

Photograph: Nick Tringham

between 1985-1990. Although only the size of a 50p piece when young, terrapins grow rapidly, often to the size of a dinner plate.

"Most people didn't realise just how big they can grow," said Sharon Harrison, of Petpals, in New Malden.

were then dumped by their owners but are now thriving in ponds and lakes.

There are estimated to be

Surrey. "This means they can be very expensive as bigger tanks have to be bought to accommodate them. This has led to people abandoning them in the wild."

800 terrapins scattered over more than 200 sites nationwide. The largest single community is in Roath Park, Lake in Cardiff, which is thought to be home to at least 100. Gavin Jones, ranger at

Roath Park, said: "They are a national problem. The winters haven't been killing them off... They can attack fish, frogs and newts and there is no natural predator for them as yet."

Many terrapins, which

attack fish, frogs and newts,

Labour's hard line prompts dismay

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour's hard-line style of leadership came under the spotlight yesterday, after a suspended MP claimed pleas for sympathy had gone unheeded. Another suspended party member claimed she had been told of her fate not by officials but by the BBC.

The Liverpool West Derby MP, Robert Wareing, wrote to his party's Chief Whip, Nick Brown, in a suicidal state after being accused of having links with a front organisation for the Bosnian Serbs, but his letter went unanswered. He said yesterday that he knew how his fellow MP Gordon McMaster died during the "last dark hours" before his own suicide last month.

Mr Wareing was found to have failed to declare a business interest, for which he was suspended from the Commons for a week and ordered to apologise.

In a statement, he said: "Colleagues must understand how deeply hurtful it is to have one's integrity called into question. Integrity is not a political prop to be tossed aside in exchange for a morning's headlines."

"After 50 years membership of the Labour Party, I was deeply shocked to be the subject of unfounded and scurrilous allegations which led to me being suspended from the party with no notice.

"All of the allegations, bar a failure to register a worthless shareholding in Robert Wareing Ltd, were thrown out by the committee, yet I have still not heard from Tony Blair who had been acknowledged and would be answered more fully when he returned from holiday."

Another source said: "There is no sympathy for this guy really. He has been found guilty by a Commons committee and we acted swiftly, as did the House of Commons."

ed by similar complaints from Oleg Clayton, a councillor suspended after Mr Brown's inquiry into Mr McMaster's death. It emerged that she had not been informed of the disciplinary action being taken against her before the press were told, though a Labour spokeswoman said unsuccessful efforts had been made to contact her.

Last night, Labour sources were largely unsympathetic to Mr Wareing's claims, though one hinted that Mr Brown had been instrumental in ensuring that the MP received support from his friends. He had several meetings with the widow of John Heddle, the Mid Staffordshire MP who killed himself in 1989, and she helped him to overcome his depression.

Mr Brown, who is generally known at Westminster as an affable if tough Chief Whip, was not available for comment last night. He has maintained in the past that he will not tolerate any form of rebellion by members. "They would risk expulsion from whatever I could get them expelled from," he said before the election.

A Labour spokeswoman said it would not have been appropriate for Mr Brown to have replied directly to Mr Wareing, as the inquiry into his conduct was still ongoing. A similar letter to Tony Blair had been acknowledged and would be answered more fully when he returned from holiday.

Another source said: "There is no sympathy for this guy really. He has been found guilty by a Commons committee and we acted swiftly, as did the House of Commons."

Young convicts ruling fuels prison crisis

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

"We believe the ruling does not differentiate between the sexes," said a prison source.

About 1,500 young men are being held unlawfully in adult jails. A High Court ruling is expected to reveal today.

Prison officials were last night drawing up emergency contingency plans to move the offenders, aged between 15 and 21, to specialist custodial accommodation. The expensive move will be a big blow to the Prison Service which is already struggling to deal with an overcrowding crisis.

It follows a ruling in the High Court on Tuesday that it was unlawful to hold a girl aged 16 with adult women inmates. Female offenders are automatically held in adult jails before being assessed and transferred to specialist wings in other prisons. The decision affects only about 50 female offenders aged under 21, but the fact that it also covers convicted young males is far more significant as there are about 5,500 in jails in England and Wales.

The Prison Service confirmed last night that it was working on the assumption that the judgment – full details of which are being disclosed today – does cover men as well as women.

The Prison Service was last night considering where it could put the 1,500 offenders. There are very few places left in the YOI, many of which are already full, and simply designating wings in adult jails as units for under-21s will not be sufficient to comply with the court ruling.

On the question of young female inmates, the Prison Service has identified about 50 offenders who under the new court ruling are considered unlawfully held. These are expected to be moved to jails with designated young offender wings.

A Prison Service spokesman said: "Some, but not all of them, are being moved. It's disruptive and some will have to be moved around the country away from their families."

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Hunters scent blood over stag ban



Steve Boggan

Deer hunters claimed victory over the National Trust last night even though they failed in a High Court bid to lift a ban on stag hunting in Devon and Somerset.

The ban stayed in place but the National Trust was told by Mr Justice Robert Walker that the "speed and secrecy" with which it had been imposed last April represented a "serious error of judgment" which appeared to pander to media demands.

Leaving the way open for the hunt lobby to challenge the ban within weeks, the judge told the National Trust to go away and reconsider its decision to impose the ban on land on Exmoor and the Quantock Hills.

It was introduced following research by Professor Patrick Bateson, a Cambridge biologist, who proved that deer suffered excruciating pain and fear during a hunt.

Justice Robert Walker, sitting



Out of action: Hounds of the Quantock hunt and (left) a member of the hunt filming during a kill. Main photograph: Christopher Jones

parcel of land in the Quantock Hills of Somerset and one tenth of the Exmoor National Park in Devon.

The court was told that the Quantocks and Exmoor are popular with visitors but are difficult to farm. Those difficulties were made harder by the presence of unchecked numbers of red deer which broke down fences and consumed or damaged crops.

The judge said that all the evidence he had heard showed that the deer must be culled to keep the herds healthy genetically and in the interests of the farming community.

Only 10 to 20 per cent of the deer were killed by hunting with hounds each year by packs which had been established from the last century.

in London, said the National Trust had been preoccupied with reaching a quick decision because of media pressure and public outrage over Professor Bateson's research.

"That seems to have led to secrecy being preferred rather than the opportunity for further consultation and discussion," he said. He described as "questionable" a decision to hold a press conference the day before the ban was imposed and, although deciding not to impose an order, he suggested the council of the National Trust meet again before another hearing to avoid future "expensive" litigation.

Huntsmen were delighted with the judge's comments.

Paddy Groves, joint master of the Quantock Staghounds, said they left the way open for a challenge to the ban under the Charities Act in the Chancery Division of the High Court. He expected a hearing within weeks.

"We did not get the injunction

making the Trust re-intro-

duce hunting, but everything else clearly went in our favour," he said. "The fact that the judge told them to go away and reconsider their decision is clearly very encouraging indeed."

We have what we want – a legal mechanism to challenge the ban – and we believe we will soon have the deer herd of the Quantock Hills in safe hands very soon."

The National Trust's response was more muted. Warren Davis, its spokesman, said the ban still stands but he added: "The National Trust will give serious consideration

to the judge's suggestion that its council should discuss the subject again.

"The welfare and conservation of the deer remains the Trust's primary concern and

we will continue working with our tenants, neighbours, local deer management groups ... to ensure the herds continue to thrive."

The Trust owns a strategic

MoD homes sale attacked as shameful

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

The taxpayer got a raw deal when the Conservative government sold 57,000 service married quarters for up to £139m less than they were worth in pursuit of short-term financial gain, according to a damning report by the Government's financial watchdog, the National Audit Office, published today.

Bruce George MP, now chairman of the House of Commons Defence Committee, will investigate "the most shameful and stupid decision" of the last government, in the autumn.

The NAO report on the sale of the 57,000 houses to the Annington group of companies, led by the Japanese bank Nomura, for £1.662m reveals that the price charged was between £77m and £139m below the value of retaining them.

Furthermore, the MoD has had to pay to lease them back, pay rent on them, and is responsible for maintenance and improvements, as well as the administrative cost and responsibility of allocating them to service families.

"I find it difficult to express coherently my continuing anger at the sale which was deeply insulting to servicemen and women," Mr George said. "It was insensitive, stupid and financially and politically motivated to gain resources for the general election. As time goes on this persistent folly will be more and more revealed."

Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, said: "This damning report shows that the privatisation of service housing was the sale of the century. The NAO has found that crucial as-

sumptions upon which the terms of sale were based are fundamentally flawed and as a result the public purse is a lot lighter than it should be."

The NAO calculated that the sale of married quarters would have benefited the taxpayer if the services had only needed to occupy half of them and if property values had only increased at 0.2 per cent a year – whereas they are currently increasing by about 10 per cent. The net result is a loss to the taxpayer of up to £139m.

The report is highly critical of the way the handover was managed. After the establishment of the Defence Housing executive in April 1995, it "became the Department's main point of contact. They maintained responsibility for directing the maintenance and upgrading of those houses leased back from Annington, the identification of surplus quarters, works services [to separate houses being sold off] and allocation of specific houses to individual service families."

Meanwhile the Annington Group will make a return on its investment of 7.5 percent per year, in addition to profits from redeveloping sites the services do not need.

However, the report says the sale succeeded in transferring four fifths of the married quarters estate to the private sector and provided funds of £100m to upgrade sub-standard quarters over the next five to seven years. It also says the sale itself was well managed and brought in more money than the MoD's advisers had expected.

National Audit Office. The Sale of the Ministry of Defence's Married Quarters Estate, HC 239, 22 August 1997

DAILY POEM

Prince Baltasar Carlos: after Velázquez

By Aníbal Núñez
(translated by John Burnside)

Does it imply possession, that the land seems nothing but the stage on which you live? Never, my Lord, despite what you believe, mounted on your imaginary steed, or idling beneath this canopy of leaves provided by an oak-tree, and the man who makes this image, following the laws of composition. No one owns a world he cannot see. If you can turn aside from this bright realm of subtlety and shade how could these hills and hunting-grounds be yours? They are the painter's. Sometimes, when he ignores the still that seeks perfection, they are his; and nothing you possess will last, sweet prince: the good life will become a dreadful bore, if death not erase you long before.

Today's Daily Poem comes again from Agenda magazine's special issue devoted to new Spanish verse, edited by Jordi Doce. The Agenda "Anthology of Spanish Poetry" costs £4.90; annual subscriptions are £20 from 5 Craibourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE.



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news

Hospitals losing battle to cut lists

Jeremy Lawrence
Health Editor

Rising emergency hospital admissions were blamed yesterday for a sharp jump in the NHS waiting list which shows that 1.2 million people are now queuing for operations.

The 13 per cent annual increase in the waiting list – for non-emergency treatment – was described as “grim news for patients” by the British Medical Association. Official figures published yesterday, which were leaked to *The Independent* at the weekend, show an extra 136,000 patients were waiting for treatment at the end of June, compared with a year ago.

Patients waiting more than a year for treatment have increased more than fourfold over the period from 10,400 to 47,000. The figures also reveal that 388 patients had been wait-

ing longer than the 18-month Patient’s Charter guarantee, compared with nine a year earlier.

The pressure on hospitals is the result of a combination of factors, including the unexplained rise in emergency admissions, estimated at 13 per cent nationally over four years, which was singled out yesterday by John Maples, Tory health spokesman. “The evidence is that emergency admissions are continuing to grow, making the task of cutting waiting lists even more difficult,” he said.

“Unfortunately, the Government is exacerbating the problem by increasing costs and reducing efficiency.”

Emergency cases tend to be more expensive to treat than routine cases and many NHS trusts have been forced to cut their contracts for routine cases this year, which means waiting lists

grow, to cope with the anticipated growth in emergency work. Trusts are also carrying deficits over from last year, the toughest financially in a decade, adding to their problems.

The BMA and opposition parties said there was no hope of cutting the waiting list without extra cash for the normal increase in emergency cases this winter. But the inevitable consequence is that

pledged for hospitals in England next year. Dr Sandy Macara, chairman of the BMA, said: “In the current situation where many health authorities and trusts are in financial deficit, everyone agrees that we have no option but to provide for the normal increase in emergency cases this winter. But the inevitable consequence is that

waiting lists and waiting times will rise to record levels. The only way to prevent this is an immediate injection of additional resources this winter.”

The Government blamed the worsening situation on the legacy it had inherited from the Conservatives but insisted it would stick to its manifesto

commitment to “cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients”. However, it was unclear yesterday whether ministers would regard treatment of an extra 100,000 patients without a concomitant cut in waiting lists (as more patients join them), as fulfilment of this pledge.

Alan Milburn, the health

minister, said: “Record NHS waiting lists and longer waiting times are the price patients have paid for the squandering of precious NHS resources on running the Tories internal market. The new Government has already put in place a series of measures to tackle the mess we have inherited.” He admitted, however, that waiting lists were

“likely to go on rising for some time”.

Health authorities are to get details of their budget increases for next year in October, two months earlier than normal, to help them plan ahead. They have been told to put urgent and emergency patients first and to avoid breaches of the Patient’s Charter.

Patient business: As waiting lists rise, health minister Tessa Jowell was promoting the Government’s preventative medicine strategy at a health centre in Birmingham. Photograph: Newsteam

Photo: PA

news

Warning on hidden cost of Tartan tax

Stephen Goodwin

Any move by an Edinburgh parliament to use its tax-raising powers could cost young Scots more than £300,000 each during a working lifetime, a senior tax adviser warned yesterday, as Scottish financial institutions continued to fret about the impact of devolution.

Not only could the prospect of a heavy financial penalty accelerate the "brain drain" out of Scotland, but pension firms

fear that the perception of a "semi-detached" Scotland could deter savers and investors living in England.

Most customers of the big Scottish pension companies are actually English. The industry is concerned that people south of the border might feel their investment would be "at risk" and that salesmen from English rivals might drop hints of being paid out in "funny money" in 20 years time.

"We want ministers to say loud and long that nothing like that is implied," said Grant Baird, executive director of Scottish Financial Enterprise, the industry's representative body.

The devolution White Paper went some way to reassuring the industry that savers with Scottish companies would not be put at a disadvantage, but for the SFE, the "level playing field" can't be stressed too often.

Government attachment to the tax-raising power was reaffirmed yesterday by Peter Mandelson, the minister without portfolio. During a visit to Scotland to support a double "Yes" vote in next month's referendum, he said it was "very important for a Scottish

parliament, for its credibility, to have that financial responsibility of tax-varying powers". The new parliament could raise or lower basic rate income tax by up to 3p in the pound.

The SFE and its members have tried to avoid being drawn into the political argument over home rule. "Banks don't have votes," observed Mr Baird. However, in probing the detail

of devolution they inevitably provide ammunition for the "No" campaign.

While a tartan tax of up to £6660 a year might be bearable to a patriotic Scot, viewed as lost investment a more impressive figure emerges. Mr Jones calculated that for somebody in their 20s with 40 years of work ahead, who could have invested the money at a modest 10 per cent return, it represented a potential loss of some £200,000 – or up to £1.5m if the individual lived to 90.

"I can't see how a bright young Scot will be discouraged from joining the drift that already exists, either south to England or to other parts of Europe," Mr Jones said.

Home rule supporters dismissed the SFE claims as "spoilers". David Head, a professor of accountancy at Aberdeen University, said: "If extra tax was levied it would be because collectively Scotland wants a better standard of living".

**In the line of fire:
The MP
who likes
to say 'No'**

Tony Heath

It's just as well that Llew Smith, Labour MP for Blaenau Gwent, and arch opponent of Welsh devolution, is inured to criticism. He needs to be.

"I was called a Trot, a member of Militant, a Tory and a traitor to Wales," he said stoically, after the "Yes" and "No" contingents clashed during a public meeting at the Pontypridd Historical and Cultural Centre.

One of a series organised by the Cardiff-based *South Wales Echo* newspaper, it was intended to enlighten. But more heat than light was generated as Mr Smith and barrister Tim Williams confronted Professor Hywel Francis, convenor of the "Yes" campaign, and Mike German, the Liberal Democrats' devolution supremo in Wales.

"No" baseball caps and T-shirts were much in evidence among the 100-strong audience, but Mr Smith quickly got into his stride. "Anyone who opposes an assembly is labelled a 'Tory stooge,'" he averred, drawing shouts of "stop moaning" and "get on with it" from the floor. He pressed on regardless. People were being asked to vote blind in the

18 September referendum, the MP claimed.

"Even Peter Mandelson doesn't know what will be in the assembly Bill. The referendum should be held after it is published and given time for a proper debate", he said.

This proved too much for Tony Carter, a retired official with the public services union Unison, and a Plaid Cymru member. Stabbing the air with his finger, he roared: "You're a Militant and a Trot". Inevitably, there was uproar.

Mel Cook, the *Echo*'s deputy editor, who was gamely chairing the meeting, succeeded in restoring order, and Mr Smith continued. "The assembly is not about regionalism. It's about nationalism. And if you want to get rid of the quangos, you

don't need an assembly – all you need is to pass legislation in parliament."

Tim Williams who in the 1980's was Plaid Cymru parliamentary aide wound up half the audience with his warning that a "yes" vote would lead to self government. "The only way

to stop this is to vote 'No,'" he recommended.

Although South Wales is now as green as a Richard Llewellyn valley, its radical past refuses to lie down. Professor Francis's father, Dai Francis, was general secretary of the South

Wales National Union of Mineworkers from 1963 to 1976, when miners wielded real power in the land.

"The cost of saying 'No' just isn't acceptable. This is not about dividing Wales or about nationalism whatever that may be. It's about giving Wales a fresh democratic mandate," he said.

The question of cost exercised many minds. "How much? Just 10p per person per week for everyone in Wales," said Mike German, who described himself as a "unilateral political disarmer".

Peter Law, a Blaenau Gwent councillor, reminded Mr Smith that his constituency Labour Party and local authority both backed the proposed assembly.

Carys Pugh, a veteran Labour activist from the Rhondda, induced one particularly talkative speaker to dissent with a stentorian "shut-up". Momentarily you could have heard the rustle of a ballot paper.

As the meeting dispersed, a woman in a yellow dress, who declined to give her name, declared angrily: "That Rhondda nubile!" Where do you live, she was asked. "I live in Ponty," Peved of Pontypridd snapped. A few miles can become the Grand Canyon when passions are inflamed.

Near the hall, an 18th-century bridge spanning the River Taff is covered in scaffolding. Repairs are underway. But more structural work may have to be put out to tender soon, to heal the divisions which the devolution debate seems to have created.



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A cleaner Britain?: Royal Commission warns ministers that unrestricted rise in traffic poses threat to nation's health

Prescott sets out vision of transport revolution

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution will warn ministers that the unrestrained rise in traffic poses a serious threat to the nation's health.

The report, due to be published next month, concludes that there is little evidence that air quality is improving - despite government reassurances that the atmosphere is gradually getting cleaner.

The news could not have come at a worse time for ministers - who set out the Government's vision for "a truly integrated transport revolution" yesterday.

Since being elected, ministers have ceaselessly repeated that they intend to get "people to use their cars less" in order to reduce pollution levels.

According to today's *Economist*, the new report will say that at street level some pollutants, such as nitrogen oxide, are increasing despite claims by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions that national standards are improving.

The commission, made up of highly-respected scientists, will also question whether ministers can meet their target of a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide levels without tougher measures to restrain traffic.

Yesterday's launch of the consultation paper on transport by ministers will help to assuage these doubts.

John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Transport, Environment and the Regions, made it clear that traffic levels could not grow at present rates.

"We would need a 100-lane motorway from London to Leeds to cope with the extra 10m cars - so something has to be done," he said.

..... but it's lost on three-car families

Alexandra Williams

Visiting the car capital of Britain, the enormity of John Prescott's task became apparent. Housing estates were being built with triple garages the norm, the town centre streets were crammed with cars and the bus depot was far from bustling.

Guildford, the Surrey commuter town, has more cars per household than anywhere in the United Kingdom. And yesterday, the car owners of the most affluent town in the country were determined to stick firmly behind the wheel.

One in 12, or 8.33 per cent, of households in Guildford have three or more cars. John James is part of that statistic.

Indignant about the Deputy

Prime Minister's proposals, Mr James said: "It's simplistic to say if there was better public transport more people would use it."

"It's to do with freedom of choice. It's our business and no one else's that we have three cars. Prescott's solution seems to be to hold a conference, wave a wand and hope everyone will obey. But I'm not going to give up my cars."

"We need them locally. I use my car for short journeys - I can't use anything else, it would be ridiculous. And it's all very well to have cheap train fares to London, but the rail companies penalise you by charging stupid amounts to park for the day."

Andrea Wootton had driven her Mercedes two miles from her home into the town centre.

Her husband, a surveyor, had driven to Slough to do a site visit. The family's third car is "a little runaround, a bit of an old banger".

Mrs Wootton felt it was justifiable for her family to have three cars. She said: "My husband can't use public transport - he's somewhere different each day. And I love my Mercedes and need it to pick the children up from school, do the shopping and take my mother to the hospital every week. I would be housebound without it."

"My eldest son is learning to drive in the other car. It's not extravagant, it's a necessity. It's all very well for Mr Prescott, who lives in London, to say this, but I'd like to see him in mine or my husband's shoes minus a car."

Motor town: Homes with triple garages is the norm on many of Guildford's new estates

Gridlock: Pollution levels in Paris have become so bad that the Government has stepped in

Photograph: Martyn Hughes

next move, pollution levels are bound to rise.

The families of seven asthmatic children took legal action last year in an attempt to force Greenwich Council in south-

east London to close Trafalgar Road - a main thoroughfare - when traffic fume levels peaked. But the council objected and the families' application was denied. However, under plans

announced by Michael Meacher, the Minister for the Environment, targets would have to be met under a "National Air Quality Strategy" - even if roads had to be shut down in order to reduce the pollution levels.

Mr Meacher said at the press conference that the necessary legislation would be in place before the "end of the year".

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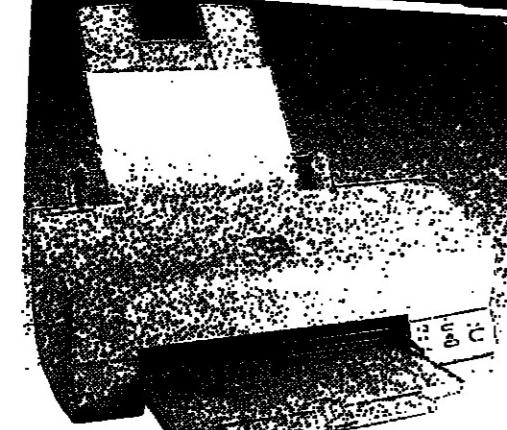
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international

Row over Montserrat aid package

Andrew Marshall

Britain announced details of an assistance package for the inhabitants of Montserrat yesterday, but it fell far short of what the volcano-stricken island's authorities had recommended. The country's Chief Minister Bertrand Osborne immediately called the aid package "totally unacceptable".

"The delays and confusion in arranging help for the beleaguered inhabitants have led to anti-British demonstrations on the normally placid island against the Governor, Frank Savage, and sparked claim and counter-claim from Whitehall and Montserrat."

The Government moved quickly to try to defuse the row, defending itself against claims of inactivity and hesitation. "I understand that people are disgruntled but we have acted very quickly and reasonably," said Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development. "We provided funds for people who want to travel to Britain, we're now announcing a package for people who want to relocate in the Caribbean," she told the BBC.

Adults moving to other countries in the Caribbean would get £2,400 over the next six months, provided they did not have savings and assets worth more than £10,000 pounds. Those under 18 would get £600. Britain would also pay air fares to nearby countries. But that is a long way short of the recommendations made by local officials.

The package is pegged to average earnings on Montserrat and is for those living on the island on August 16, when scientists said the volcano was

becoming much more dangerous. Those who left earlier can apply for help under another scheme yet to be announced.

In a live broadcast to Radio ZJB Montserrat, Ms Short warned islanders that "money did not grow on trees".

"We have to account to our Parliament for the way we spend our money. We have to compare it with what British people get when they have a disaster." She added: "Some kind of crazy figures have been thrown around," but said much higher payments had "never been on the cards".

Britain has already waived work permit regulations for Montserratians arriving in Britain and allowed them to claim social security. This is a temporary concession and 1400 have already taken up the offer.

Defending itself against critics, the Foreign Office said yesterday that "there may be a breakdown in communication between the government in Montserrat and its own citizens". But the issue is currently being handled by three departments - the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development and the Home Office - and there are signs of weak co-ordination.

There were also clashes between local officials and the Foreign Office over whether an evacuation was under way. "Those people who want to leave are leaving," a Foreign Office spokesman said. "Some people are taking up the offer of voluntary evacuation, not in great numbers but in an orderly fashion. There's no emergency."

Montserrat officials said the Foreign Office was wrong. Eugene Skerritt, permanent secretary to the chief minister, said: "The evacuation has not started and the false reports are causing us a lot of trouble. People believe we are hiding something from them."

There is also mounting anger on the islands neighbouring Montserrat, which have taken in those who have fled the wrath of the volcano. Antigua now hosts 4,000 Montserratians - as many as remain in Montserrat itself. "I have written to the Secretary of State and said that the situation is now dire and requires urgent attention," said Ronald Sanders, High Commissioner of Antigua and Barbuda in London.



Fires within: People in the town of Oliverston watching smoke billowing from the Soufrière Hills volcano yesterday

Photograph: Chris Brandis/AP

Senior Service prepares for evacuation

Up to 500 people a day may leave the island by boat for Antigua

Phil Davison
On board HMS Liverpool,
off Montserrat

Captain David Snelson thinks he and his 250 crewmen and women can cope with the volcano. But he is praying they don't get hit by a hurricane during their current operation.

The crew of the guided missile destroyer mobilised on board and onshore yesterday to organise the evacuation of up to 3,000 Montserratians who wish to leave the island, probably beginning either today or tomorrow.

Barring hurricanes or strong tropical storms - the hurricane season is about to reach its peak - they hope to oversee the

day to neighbouring Antigua and complete the operation by the end of August.

The Liverpool lowered its "scrambling net" - a rope webbing for emergency boarding - and its "accommodation ladder", or vertical gangplank, yesterday for use in the event of a major volcanic eruption on the British Caribbean colony.

But the captain was confident the warship itself would not be needed to evacuate Montserratians. It will be used only if the volcano stages a major eruption and people flee to the shorelines of Little Bay in the north of the island.

Two or three small tour boats, carrying around 50 people each, will ferry evacuees to the nearby island of Antigua. A few may stay there but most are expected to wait in hotels, at Britain's expense, for up to three weeks while onward flights to Britain are arranged.

In that case, the ship's Lynx helicopter and two rigid inflatables would bring people on board but that would be a slow process and Capt. Nelson considers it an unlikely worst-case scenario.

The Liverpool crew and women, in blue tropical uniforms and shorts, put up tents yesterday beside the jetty built in June to facilitate the evacuation. At least one Liverpool crew member with first-aid

training will travel on each flight.

Capt. Nelson said he was annoyed by some British media coverage which suggested the Liverpool was here as part of "Palmerstonian gunboat" diplomacy while doing nothing to help Montserratians.

"In an emergency, we'd just pack everybody on board. On Families' Day in Portsmouth we had 550 people on board," he said.

The hurricane season does pose a complication," the captain added. "You wouldn't want people out on ferries during a hurricane. But the Caribbean has good early warning on storms so might stop the evacuation, or speed it up."

He said that in the event of a major volcanic eruption, the crew would be prepared to leave with only two

"we'd weigh anchor and loiter a mile or two away".

Crewmen said the ship had to install filters on air inlets after ash and grit from the volcano showered the warship recently. There was a strong smell of sulphur in the area, from the volcano, as the captain spoke.

In touching scenes onshore

yesterday, scores of people registered for the voluntary evacuation. Kingsley Meade, a pentecostal preacher, said he hoped to get to Edmonton, north London, to live with his son. The registration form told him he could leave with only two

suitcases.

Priscilla Allen, 63, was not worried about the suitcase quota. She could barely fill one with the things she was able to take when she fled her home in Streatham two years ago and moved from shelter to shelter.

Kurd extradited to Germany on terrorist charge

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

A Kurdish leader has been extradited to Germany to face charges of masterminding a series of terrorist attacks after spending 33 months in a British jail fighting deportation.

Supporters of Kani Yilmaz, European spokesman for the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK, which is fighting a guerrilla campaign against the Turkish authorities for Kurdish independence, yesterday accused the British government of supporting state terrorism.

Mr Yilmaz, 47, also known as Faysal Dunayevchi, is accused of playing a leading role in planning nearly 140 arson attacks on Turkish businesses, banks, travel agencies and other interests throughout Germany in 1993. The PKK are outlawed in Germany, where one man was killed in a restaurant arson. He was arrested in London outside the House of Commons in October 1994 as he was about to meet a Labour MP and a peer to discuss the Kurdish issue. He had been allowed into Britain on a number of occasions with

the permission of immigration officials.

Mr Yilmaz and his supporters, who include a number of Labour MPs, have been fighting a Germany extradition order, but Jack Straw the Home Secretary, has agreed to it.

They believe he could face imprisonment in Germany for his political beliefs. He and other party members have highlighted widespread human rights abuses against the Kurds by the Turkish government.

His imprisonment at Belmarsh high security jail in south London led to street battles with Kurdish demonstrators and protests by more than 2,000 Kurds outside the Home Office.

Mark Campbell, a member of the Kurdish Solidarity Committee, a campaign group in London, said that Mr Yilmaz, who arrived in Germany on Wednesday, was determined to fight his case in court.

He added: "There is supposed to be freedom of speech in Britain. A political representative should be allowed into this country to talk about peaceful solutions without fear of arrest."

significant shorts

Tobacco chief admits smoking-related deaths

About 100,000 Americans "might have" died from smoking-related diseases the chairman of tobacco company Philip Morris conceded yesterday to lawyers suing his company. Geoffrey Bible made the surprise admission during questioning in preparation for trial of a lawsuit. Ron Motley, a lawyer representing Florida, called Mr Bible's statement a major breakthrough because, he said, for one maverick, other industry leaders have not made such a concession.

AP - West Palm Beach

N Korea faces more famine

Famine-stricken North Korea is expected to face more hard times next year because the current drought would seriously affect crops, South Korea's Unification Ministry said. The grain shortage was likely to rise to 2.6 million tonnes in 1998 from 2 million.

Reuters - Seoul

India U-turn over the Queen

The Queen can visit any part of India that she wants during her trip in October, Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said in an apparent about-face in a controversy over the monarch's tour. "The main thing is that she is an honoured guest of India. We do not want any controversy during her visit," Mr Gujral said.

Reuters - New Delhi

Clinton postpones strike move

President Bill Clinton moved to postpone any strike at the Amtrak rail road by 60 days, acting two days after the Teamsters Union ended a disruptive two-week walkout at United Parcel Service (UPS). The President intervened by invoking the Railway Labor Act, a law that empowers him to prevent a disruption of interstate commerce.

Reuters - Edgartown, Massachusetts

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Match 3	461,353	£10	£4,613,530
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Mother's Day
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John le Carré
Glenys Naidu
Peter Ackroyd
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S Africa agrees arms spending spree

Mary Braid
Johannesburg

After three years of apocalyptic warnings that South Africa would soon be relying on leaking submarines and rusty planes to defend its borders, defence minister Joe Modise has persuaded President Nelson Mandela's government to embark on its first military spending spree.

Hard lobbying has produced a marked change of heart. In 1994 South Africa's purchase of four Corvettes – for which Britain's Yarrow shipyard was on a shortlist of two to build – was halted by the African National Congress on the grounds

the money would be better spent on schools and clinics. But the Cape Town parliament has now endorsed defence department proposals to purchase four Corvettes, four submarines and other armaments; a plan already approved by President Mandela's cabinet.

Parliament's decision is regarded as a major victory for Mr Modise whose defence budget

has been slashed by 60 per cent since 1989. "He has lobbied hard to counter the arguments put forward in 1994," said former Brigadier Bill Sass, deputy director for the Institute of Security Studies. "Arguments about schools and clinics did not wash now... Most military analysts agree the South African defence force is in a bad condition. The navy's last warships were bought 25 years ago."

Mr Sass said military spending was essential if South Africa was to maintain its regional po-

sition. "One of the reasons we keep shying away from peacekeeping is that we don't have the necessary equipment, particularly aircraft."

Not all the institute's staff are as enthusiastic. Dr Jakkie Cilliers, the director, has been arguing for months that with apartheid and the Cold War gone the South African National Defence Force should be fundamentally redefining itself. He recommends it focus on internal crime fighting and anti-illegal immigrant border patrol

since there is no immediate or medium term military threat from its neighbours.

But defence chiefs warn a military force cannot be built up overnight and South Africa should always be ready for unforeseen aggression.

Anticipating parliamentary approval, the international defence companies are already in South Africa pitching for business. "Overseas salesmen are already buying drinks for South African navy officers," said Mr Sass.

The military contracts involve billions of rands and lucrative international counter-trade deals. Mr Sass said Britain was expected to put together a package to provide Corvettes, fighter aircraft and four surplus Upholder class submarines, which were built by Vickers for the British government in the mid-1990s for £600m but never went into operation.

South Africa's defence budget is 1.6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. It reached an apartheid-era peak of 4.5 per cent of GDP in 1989. The defence department is pushing for the budget to be raised to around 2 per cent; the level for which it claims many other countries settle.

The SANDF, now composed of former guerrillas who fought apartheid and the soldiers who once defended it, is halving its personnel in line with Mr Modise's promise to create a leaner, cheaper, better equipped fighting force. While job cuts will bring savings which can be ploughed into new

equipment, Mr Modise has yet to clinch his bitter battle with finance minister Trevor Manuel for a gradual guaranteed increase in defence spending. According to Dr Cilliers, the SANDF's new spending will have to be gradual and initially on credit.

Given the SANDF's disreputable past the rehabilitation of the forces has proved a tricky business. Deputy defence minister Ronnie Kasrils promised earlier this year that SANDF had transformed itself and was no longer the "same old ravenous wolf plundering state coffers at the expense of the poor and needy".

Singapore leader in court battle

PM and opposition leader hire British lawyers to fight their case

Matthew Chance

In a defamation case which has struck at the heart of Singapore's autocratic leadership style, a leading British QC defending a veteran opposition figure is awaiting a court verdict after four days of bruising and – for Singapore – frank public debate.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was accused by George Carman QC of "exaggerating" to the court for the purposes of "putting a shine" on his slander case against Joshua Jeayaraman, the country's 71-year-old Workers' Party leader. Mr Jeayaraman faces financial ruin and the effective end of his long political career if the court decides to award heavy financial damages to Mr Goh, over remarks made during last December's election campaign.

Mr Goh has contested and won multi-million pound defamation cases against numerous political opponents and newspapers.

The prime minister says Mr Jeayaraman lobbed a political "Molotov cocktail" at his leadership by announcing at an election rally the fact that an

other opposition figure, Tang Liang Hong, had filed police reports against the ruling party. The reports were later made public on the orders of Mr Goh, who said he had nothing to hide.

The original defamation, on the eve of polling day, to an audience hostile to the plaintiff, was calculated to whip up emotions and feelings against him and cause the maximum political damage and personal hurt," Mr Goh's British lawyer, Tom Shields, told a packed High Court in his summation.

In a searing attack on the prime minister's motives in bringing the matter to court, Mr Carman, 68, an Oxford-educated barrister and one of Britain's most accomplished barristers, poured scorn on the politician's claim for damages, arguing that the statement to which the prime minister objected was not only true – a fact that in Britain or the United States would in most cases be the ultimate defence – but did the standing of the Singaporean government "no harm whatsoever". "This case in justice, fairness and in reason should be dismissed in law," said Mr Carman, concluding that the prime minister's testimony had been "a piece of cheap melodrama" in reaction to "the normal cut and thrust of democratic politics".

He accused the prime minister of attempting to silence his critics through the courts. Throughout the hearing, Mr Goh insisted that his purpose in coming to court was solely to protect his reputation and that of his party colleagues. But he testified that 1997 had been a good year, saying his standing in the world had not been injured.



George Carman QC: Accused PM of exaggerating to the court



A Cambodian girl being cooled down by her mother at the Kap Cheung camp in eastern Thailand. Bangkok officials have asked to meet Cambodian counterparts to discuss the rapidly rising number of refugees. Photograph: Reuters

Siew is named as Taiwan's prime minister

Teresa Poole
Peking

Taiwan's President, Lee Teng-hui, yesterday named Vincent Siew as his new prime minister, paving the way for a government reshuffle aimed at restoring the popularity of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) party.

The switch will allow the outgoing prime minister, Lien Chan, who is also deputy president, to spend more time repairing his low public ratings ahead

of presidential elections due in 2000, when he is likely to emerge as the KMT's candidate. Mr Lee has said he will not stand again and has been grooming Mr Lien as his successor.

Mr Siew, 58, will take up his post on 1 September after next week's KMT annual party congress approves the appointment. He will be the first Taiwan-born prime minister since the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949, and also the first prime minister to have been popularly elected to the legislature. Mr Siew

(pronounced Shao) led Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council in 1994-5 and last year he ran Mr Lee's successful campaign in the presidential elections.

Earlier yesterday, Mr Lien and his whole cabinet tendered their resignations to make way for the expected cabinet reshuffle. Mr Lien, 60, had wanted to give up the prime ministership when he was elected deputy president last year, and again offered to resign earlier this year after a spate of high-profile murders and kidnappings re-

sulted in public demonstrations of 50,000 protesters against the government's inability to deal with crime. Most grisly was the kidnapping and murder of a television celebrity's 17-year-old daughter, Pai Hsiao-yen, whose body was found naked in a drain.

Fighting crime will remain high on the agenda for the new government, especially after a gun battle in Taipei this week when one of Ms Pai's kidnappers was killed, but two managed to escape a massive police cordon. Last

week Taiwan's top police officer, the National Police Administration director Yao Kao-chio, resigned after the same gang abducted and tortured a local businessman.

Mr Siew's experience on mainland affairs will stand him in good stead for further wrangles with Peking as China becomes more aggressive about wanting a timetable for reunification. This week Peking dismissed an offer from Taipei to reopen talks, which have been suspended for two years.

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<i>Instant Access Cheque Account</i>	<i>£250,000+</i>	<i>3.60</i>	<i>3.65</i>
	<i>£100,000-249,999</i>	<i>3.20</i>	<i>3.24</i>
	<i>£50,000-99,999</i>	<i>2.70</i>	<i>2.73</i>
	<i>£10,000-49,999</i>	<i>2.35</i>	<i>2.37</i>
	<i>£2,000-9,999</i>	<i>1.90</i>	<i>1.91</i>
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4.95 5.04

*Capital Reserve Account***

<i>£250,000+</i>	<i>5.70</i>	<i>5.82</i>
<i>£100,000-249,999</i>	<i>5.50</i>	<i>5.61</i>
<i>£50,000-99,999</i>	<i>5.20</i>	<i>5.30</i>
<i>£10,000-49,999</i>	<i>4.80</i>	<i>4.89</i>
<i>£2,000-9,999</i>	<i>4.40</i>	<i>4.47</i>
<i>£1-1,999</i>	<i>4.40</i>	<i>4.47</i>

*Practice Call Account**

5.30 5.41

Designated Clients Account

<i>£100,000+</i>	<i>5.30</i>	<i>5.41</i>
<i>£50,000-99,999</i>	<i>5.10</i>	<i>5.20</i>
<i>£10,000-49,999</i>	<i>4.85</i>	<i>4.94</i>
<i>£2,000-9,999</i>	<i>3.45</i>	<i>3.49</i>
<i>£1-1,999</i>	<i>1.95</i>	<i>1.96</i>

Business Call Account

<i>£250,000+</i>	<i>4.30</i>	<i>4.37</i>
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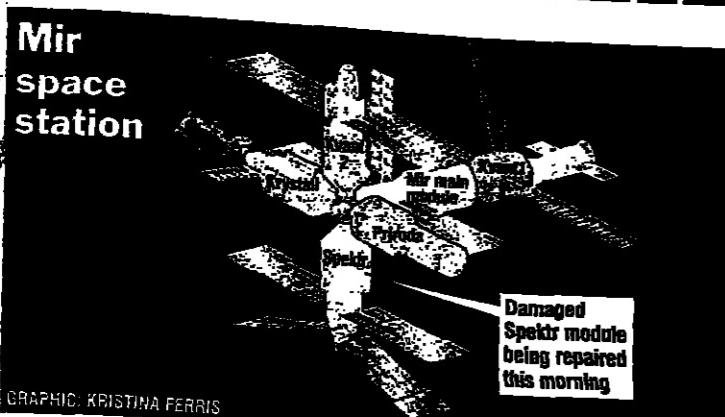
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international

Destiny day in mission to save Mir



Helen Womack

The two Russian cosmonauts on the ageing *Mir* complex will today take a risky "internal space walk" into the dark vacuum of the depressurised Spektr module in an attempt to repair damage which has left the station half-crippled since a collision in June.

Throughout the operation Michael Foale, the British-born guest astronaut from Nasa, will sit in the escape capsule to which his crewmates, Anatoly Solov'yov and Pavel Vinogradov, would beat a hasty retreat if an emergency meant they had to evacuate *Mir*. But both Russian and US space officials expressed confidence yesterday that the repairs would succeed and give the 11-year-old station a new lease of life.

Mir, which has suffered a string of technical faults because, on their own admission, the Russians are saving money by only replacing spare parts when they break down instead of when they reach the end of their life expectancy, lost half its power in June when a Progress cargo craft hit and killed Spektr.

The module had to be disconnected from the mother ship and stopped contributing its share of energy from the solar panels which cover the entire exterior of *Mir*.

The aim of today's repairs is to reconnect the cables between *Mir* and Spektr. But the task is a good deal trickier than putting plugs back into sockets.

Because Spektr is airless, Solov'yov and Vinogradov can only enter it wearing oxygen-giving suits of the kind they would put on to walk in open space.

Igor Goncharov, the chief doctor at Mission Control, said the "internal space walk" was easier than leaving the space ship from a psychological point of view because there would be "no hanging in space, no seeing the Earth below your feet". But it will be more difficult in physical terms.

The Russian-made Orlan space suits are bulky, the passage into Spektr is narrow, the module itself has little room for cat-swinging and debris such as broken glass could be floating around inside. David Wolf, the US astronaut training to replace Foale, ripped his glove during a simulation of the Spektr operation in a swimming pool at Star City outside Moscow this week.

If the cosmonauts tear their suits for real today, they will have little chance of surviving.

Commander Solov'yov, who has 43 hours of space-walking experience, will bear the main burden of the work, gliding into Spektr feet-first while Vinogradov gives him support from behind. Foale will sit in the Soyuz rocket but not in a space suit.

"If something goes seriously wrong," said Valery Ryumin, head of the Mir-Nasa programme, "all three cosmonauts will have to abandon *Mir* in the Soyuz."

Mission Control was not anticipating problems. The computer failure which earlier this week forced the crew to save energy by switching off all but life-support systems was corrected. *Mir* recovered its orientation in relation to the sun and recharged its batteries. The spacemen also recharged theirs by resting yesterday and going to bed early ahead of the repairs which were due to start first thing in the morning.



Dress rehearsal: David Wolf, the US astronaut scheduled to replace Michael Foale on board *Mir*, donning a spacesuit during a weightlessness training exercise at Mission Control in Russia. Photograph: Reuters

Yeltsin joins trend of tighter arms exports

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

nalising a new "code of conduct" on arms exports. Mr Yeltsin said he would personally approve all weapons export, until a detailed list of items allowed to be sold and of approved customers is finalised.

Mr Yeltsin has also ordered the newly appointed chief of Promexport, Vyacheslav Filimonov, to devise new measures to facilitate exports. According to Rosvooruzhenie's deputy director, Oleg Sidorenko, Russia is aiming to export arms to the Persian Gulf, elsewhere in the Middle East and Latin America, as well as its traditional customers, India and China.

Third world countries often need help to pay for their arms through export credit guarantees. Mr Sidorenko said that although the US is by far the world's biggest arms exporter - Russia might "catch up by 2001" - though Western experts doubt it. Russia's economy is in crisis and although some of its armaments are superb there are doubts about Russia's ability to provide after-sales service.

In Mr Kotelnik's place Mr Yeltsin has appointed Yevgeny Ananov, a former chairman of the Mapo bank which is linked with the company that builds the MiG-29 fighter aircraft. The Presidential decrees issued yesterday transformed Rosvooruzhenie into a new state company bearing the same name but with greater government control. Two other state-run companies, Promexport and the new "Russian Technologies Company" were also granted the status of official weapons exporters. Promexport will handle selling military equipment made obsolete by Russia's planned military reforms, and Russian Technologies will handle the provision of military expertise necessary to operate equipment. Rosvooruzhenie will continue to handle the export of most new weapons systems.

Russia seems to be taking a leaf out of its Western competitors' book. Shortly after Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, announced a new "ethical" approach to arms exports, and with the US Congress fi-

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Peace-keepers move in to halt Serb civil war

Tensions mount between rival factions in Pale and Banja Luka

Christopher Bellamy

The international community pulled together yesterday to try to prevent a civil war breaking out in Serb-controlled Bosnia. Tension was feared to be mounting between supporters of Biljana Plavšić, the elected President of the Bosnian Serb mini-state - "Republika Srpska" - and those still loyal to ex-president and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić, including Momočilo Krajišnik, the Serb member of the three-man Presidency of all Bosnia.

On Wednesday, international peace-keepers moved into Banja Luka in north-west Bosnia to block a possible coup by police opposed to Ms Plavšić, seizing 2,500 illegally held arms and quantities of bombing equipment.

There had been fears that Russia - a member of the five-nation "contact group", along with the US, Britain, France and Germany - would break with the other members over the conduct of elections for a parliamentary assembly due to be held on 11-12 October. But yesterday a meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), held in Vienna, ended on an optimistic note.

The OSCE's main role in the peace-building process is to monitor elections. Russia, which had opposed OSCE participation in the October elections, "took a flexible position", diplomatic sources said. "They said Plavšić's efforts to implement the [November 1995] Dayton peace accord deserve our support. The idea of holding elections is a good one and the OSCE should continue its preparatory work."

The Danish chairman said all the delegates now thought OSCE involvement was a good idea.

Wednesday's dramatic operation, in which British and

Czech ground troops and US gunship helicopters disarmed Bosnian Serb police opposed to Ms Plavšić was a clear intervention in what might have become a civil war between rival Bosnian Serb factions. Yesterday morning the international stabilisation force - SFOR - was on tenterhooks, wondering whether armed opposition would break out.

Plavšić's opponents condemned her as a collaborator, and even compared her to Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

Karadžić supporters issued a proclamation describing the move into Banja Luka as "an attempt at foreign occupation" and condemning Plavšić as a traitor.

Later in the day the UN's International Police Task Force continued going through the material seized in the five police depots in Banja Luka on Wednesday.

The haul included rocket launchers, thousands of rounds of ammunition, hand grenades and "a couple of items that belong more in a James Bond movie than in a police station", according to UN spokesman Alexander Ivanković.

Under the Dayton agreement the Bosnian Serb police are allowed side arms but not "long-barrelled weapons" - rifles - let alone rocket launchers. The items included booby-trapped pens, plastic explosives and fake UN licence plates.

International diplomats believe Ms Plavšić, who was democratically elected in September last year, can be trusted and hope she will help find and extradite war crimes suspects Karadžić and Ratko Mladić.

US envoy Robert Gelbard blamed Krajišnik and Karadžić for creating "an extremely dangerous situation" by refusing to permit the rule of law and the exercise of democratic institutions".

UCAS Listings

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Friday 22 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (FINANCE/BUSINESS/LAW)

Sunday 24 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (TEACHING TRAINING)

Tuesday 26 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (SCIENCE & ENGINEERING)

Thursday 28 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (AGRICULTURE)

Sunday 31 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (LANGUAGES)

Wednesday 3 September

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (SCIENCE & ENGINEERING)

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Wednesday 10 September

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THE INDEPENDENT

THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY

These starred As are good news for Britain

Britain is a world leader in post-imperial blues. A sense of failure permeates our perception of ourselves. In areas ranging from the economy to sport, millions have long felt that things are not quite as they should be. Other countries have soared onward and upward, while Britain has felt itself left trailing. Even when the news has proved to be somewhat better than conventional pessimism might suggest, we have been reluctant to concede any change for the better. German newspapers regularly carry envious articles about the efficiency of the British economy, but we Brits are still secretly convinced that we have failed.

Thus, on education, there is a widespread disinclination to believe that the news can be anything but bad. So, when the evidence appears to be mostly that things are improving, a hundred arguments come up to show that it cannot be so. Exam results gradually get better, but the obvious explanation – that pupils (and therefore teachers) are performing better – is regarded as probable poppycock. Instead, the immediate assumption is that the exams themselves must have become easier. How can there be so many starred As, sceptical adults wonder?

And yet, a report last year compared exams and marking schemes between the Seventies and the present day, and found little sign of a radical change in standards or performance. If anything,

the suggestion seemed to be that more intelligent analysis is now required of pupils than in the golden olden days. Pure maths seems to be less demanding. Even that, however, is partly because pupils are expected to have a grasp of a greater area than before.

The results in maths and science have continued to improve slightly year after year, after the initial leap forward when GCSEs were introduced in 1988. That first bound was probably misleading. But the subsequent improvements are likely to have been real. There is no evidence from other countries that the generosity of examination markers increases year by year, nor is there any reason why the British should be different in this regard. The comparison between exam results and sports records is not perfect, but neither is it obviously wrong. We have long become accustomed to the fact that performances on the athletics track get better as the years go by, relentlessly pushing previous world records into oblivion. In education, where the flaws are widely acknowledged, we should be pleased but not surprised if things gradually improve.

The reality is that, after long neglect, and recent strenuous efforts to raise sights in schools, pupils and teachers are beginning to respond. It was always going to be a long haul, and the pace needs to be kept up, for the simple reason that we still lag needlessly behind

too many competitor nations in fields such as maths, science and technology. But progress is being made: the pendulum has swung from the regimented education of previous generations (where what mattered was the ability to parrot replies, without necessarily understanding their significance) to the equally damaging discovery methods of more recent years. The pendulum has now swung back to the centre, where both sides acknowledge the weakness of previous extremes: long may it remain suspended there.

The national curriculum, so roundly attacked when it was introduced, has



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help to escape the culture still common in Britain, in which children and their parents conspire to despise achievement and aspiration. Lifting standards throughout schools can be beneficial for all, not just for the gifted few.

We should worry a little about the shift in subjects now being studied – a 2 per cent decline, for example, in the numbers taking GCSE English, which marked a greater drop than the absolute drop in the number of 16-year-olds. Increases in pupils studying information technology are welcome, but do we really want more children taking physical education at the expense of English? However, it is by no means clear that the results have been "cheapened"; for many pupils, the broader range of subjects offers greater opportunity to achieve.

That, in fact, is what we should all be after: attempting to find ways of enabling all children to achieve more – not by lowering the height of the hurdles in order to get the weaker ones round the track, but by offering a variety of events in which they can excel. The hurdles that need to be raised continuously are those set for schools and teachers, so that they never start to believe that they can level off.

Right now, in the middle of another August, when some children around the country are scooping a heap of starred As, and others are rejoicing at having simply mustered a few passes,

the proper spirit is one of congratulation, not only to pupils, but also to their teachers, in those schools which have raised their game. And if the increased numbers taking GCSE sciences presages a larger number of pupils setting off next month on science and technology A-levels, so much the better: let's give them all the encouragement we can.

Stop talking, start walking

There you are, enjoying your socially purposeful job working as a redundancy counsellor for an agency that offers redundancy counselling, and guess what? You're made redundant. What do you do? Start talking to yourself? No, there is nothing funny about anyone being made redundant, and it's not to be mocked. But it is curious that this should happen in the week that people say they are starting to grow weary of the whole business of counselling, especially how-to-cope-with-life-trauma counselling. Well, the anti-counselling lobby has a case, in that we have some reason to expect families and friends to help us through rough waters. The problem is, well meaning though they might be, they don't always know what they're talking about.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Brightest and best can be good GPs

Sir: Jeremy Laurance ("Doctor, doctor, you're not on my wavelength", 20 August) suggests that medical schools should lower their admission criteria to let in the sort of people who will not be bored as GPs.

He clearly does not have much idea about what GPs do. We are expected to know almost as much about any topic in medicine as a consultant who specialises in nothing else, and to explain it to the patient so that they understand it. We have to make diagnoses using our own senses and a few simple instruments, without the back-up of hugely expensive laboratory and X-ray departments. We don't know whether the next patient through the door will have a cold, a major psychiatric illness or a rare disease we haven't heard of since medical school. We also have to empathise with patients, counsel them and act as their advocate in dealings with the NHS, social services and housing departments.

General practice may be exhausting, frustrating and sometimes deeply satisfying, but it is rarely boring. By all means select surgeons with nimble fingers, psychiatrists who like talking to people and pathologists with no sense of smell, but please let us keep some bright students to turn into skilled, empathetic GPs.

JOHN ADAMS
Postgraduate Tutor in General Practice Stockport, Greater Manchester

Sir: Jeremy Laurance missed one salient point. People over the age of 30 are discouraged, and even prohibited, from applying to medical school.

I recently applied to medical school at the grand old age of 33 and received one offer of interview (Liverpool University) and no place. This despite the fact that I have a PhD degree, have worked in a hospital pathology laboratory for five years and have undertaken voluntary work. One university told me that applicants over 30 years of age are not accepted.

Whilst I appreciate that training to become a doctor is an expensive business and that younger qualified doctors are able to put in more years of service, I have to ask whether age and experience count for anything in the medical profession.

JOHN HAYS
Tonk

Drivers plead not guilty

Sir: I read with some concern the series of articles based on Christian Wolmar's pamphlet *Unlocking the Gridlock* ("You, your car and how to end the affair", 19 August).

It seems there is now a concerted campaign to force drivers off the roads into poorly funded and inadequate public transport. The freedoms brought by the car are increasingly being ignored and drivers are made to feel guilty each time they start their engines. Mr Wolmar's arguments appear to centre on dire predictions of worsening congestion and environmental damage. These arguments are, I believe, fallacious.

It is highly unlikely that congestion will worsen in line with the dire predictions of the green lobby. Eighty per cent of those



Counselling helps the bereaved

Sir: Your report, "Counselling loses face in NHS review", (18 August) does little to enhance the current discussion about developing standards of good professional practice in counselling and too glibly glosses over the potential value of counselling to clients, particularly in bereavement.

In our experience, clients come to services such as Cruse Bereavement Care because they recognise a need for support in moving themselves through a particularly difficult life event. In counselling, they are offered opportunities for expression of their grief and loss together with a variety of supports to enable them to readjust and build a new way forward. For the majority of the 35,000 clients counselled by Cruse in a year, this is felt to be beneficial.

A research study of a bereavement counselling service conducted by M Relf (1994) showed that those who received counselling made less use of GPs than a control group who received no such counselling. The savings to the Health Service more than outweighed the cost of providing the bereavement service.

Counselling is offered by Cruse as part of a much broader range of bereavement support services designed to meet the varied needs of clients.

ROSEMARY PEARCE
Director, Cruse, Richmond, Surrey

A long life in Victorian times

Sir: David Miles ("As people live longer let them work longer", 18 August) uses the fact that in 1847 male life expectancy at birth was only 41 years to deduce that "the average boy" would have a working life of 30 years from age 11 to death.

I have no idea what life expectancy was then at age 10, 20 or 30, but high infant and childhood mortality were in a large part responsible for the low average life expectancy at birth.

Life expectancy at birth tells you very little about the typical age of death, especially for those who made it into their teens. David Miles is in danger of perpetuating the myth that in past centuries society was full of ancient 30-year-olds waiting for death.

TERRY MARSHALL
Norwich

Mir: errors at mission control

Sir: The time has come to bring to bear international public opinion on the organisers of the present Mir space mission before it ends in tragedy. A decision needs to be taken at once to bring back the astronauts to Earth, followed by consideration of how best to remove Mir from service.

If anything happens to these men, this will mark the end of international space missions for the foreseeable future, as the present mission organisers will be seen as unreliable collaborators in whom the international community has lost trust.

The human errors in this mission are not in the spacecraft. They are in mission control. They are vanity, complacency and trusting to luck beyond what is practical and sensible.

TERESA RICKARDS
Bury, Lancashire

Keep young girls out of prison

Sir: The Howard League welcomes the recent High Court ruling that the automatic placement of young female offenders in adult women's jails for assessment and allocation is unlawful (report, 20 August). However, we dispute the assertion, widely reported, that eight out of 14 women's prisons have specialist wings for young offenders.

As part of its inquiry investigating the use of prison custody for girls aged under 18, the Howard League has recently visited nine prisons holding 15-, 16- and 17-year-old girls. We found that these prisons did not have special units for either juveniles or young offenders and did not provide a separate regime or culture as, we believe, Parliament intended they should.

Instead we found girls as young as 15 mixing fully with adult prisoners convicted of a range of offences including violent and sexual crimes against minors. The girls were subjected to an environment where women regularly self-mutilated and attempted suicide, where bullying was endemic and where drugs were widely available.

There were few specialist educational and training facilities and often girls had no opportunity to take part in social skills courses such as anger management and drug awareness and if they did they were invariably mixed in with adults.

Staff were not trained to deal with youngsters who often display complex and difficult behaviour as a result of having experienced a combination of abuse, serious loss and drug and alcohol dependency.

The placement of these already damaged young people in the harsh environment of prison only serves to deepen the problems which lie behind their offending behaviour.

If the Government is really committed to reducing youth crime it must take measures which genuinely tackle offending behaviour and abandon the populist and punitive approach of the last Conservative government.

A first step would be to move beyond the remit of this High Court decision and outlaw the detention of juvenile girls in any prison establishment.

FRAN RUSSELL
Youth Policy Officer, London N19

Sir: M D Wells (Letters, 18 August) from Pinner informs us that Parisians are "rude, ignorant, and in a hurry".

This may or may not be the case, but I am sure that they are more polite and too well educated to make crass generalisations about people from Pinner.

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analysis

A happy ending for Ulster

Breathe it softly, but the signs in Northern Ireland are pointing to a way out of the minefield of sectarian hatred and violence. At last, says David McKittrick, a pathway is being cleared that could lead to genuine peace in our time

Much of the Northern Ireland body politic might currently best be described as bemused, as both players and observers struggle to come to terms with the extraordinary events of recent months. They are also grappling with the biggest question of all: can there be peace?

The question is a huge one, dependent on so many permutations, personalities, forces and future events. The path ahead is, almost literally, through a minefield strewn with potential paramilitary and political crises. There will be many fraught moments.

But when all factors have been weighed, and all bets hedged, the answer to the question is: yes, there can be peace in our time. It seems too much to hope that there will be harmony, integration and trust, for many years yet, but there can be peace.

Equally, there are no guarantees, and it is as well to acknowledge the negatives and obstacles in the way. This is, after all, Northern Ireland, which for more than a quarter of a century has stood as an international metaphor for violence, religious bigotry and political intractability.

The IRA ceasefire came as a surprise to most, and no one can predict with complete confidence that it will last. Even if it does, fringe republican groups such as the INLA and Continuity Army Council wait in the wings, ready to pounce on anything that can be presented as a betrayal of traditional republican ideals.

On the extreme Protestant side, the loyalist ceasefire may have lasted almost three years, but its stated terms are highly conditional, much more so than those of the IRA. It has also proved a highly imperfect ceasefire, since the

major loyalist groups have broken it to carry out several killings. They refrained from publicly admitting responsibility for these, while London, anxious not to have their political representatives from the Stormont talks process, turned a Nelsonian blind eye. In fact, loyalists have been responsible for seven deaths in the last seven months.

The loyalist paramilitary underworld also has its own equivalent of the INLA and CAC, the Loyalist Volunteer Force. This small but dangerous breakaway group, which has already killed two people and has staged prison protests, could provide a focus for disgruntled dissident loyalists who may conclude in the months and years ahead that too many concessions are being made to republicans.

On both sides, in other words, the traditional terrorist groups remain out there, their arms un-decommissioned, and with smaller and more militant rivals hovering in the background.

The sheer longevity of the conflict has produced a society all too familiar with the gun. The number of men who are or have been in prison for murder approaches 1,000, while 10,000 or more have served time for other terrorist-related offences. Thousands more have simply never been caught.

On the legal side of the violence equation, the number of local men who are or have been members of the heavily armed security forces probably exceeds 50,000. Such official resort to the gun may have been necessary, but it is clearly not healthy for a society to have so many imbued with the notion that resolving conflicts is achieved with firearms rather than with politics.

To that feeling can be added all the other negative sentiments stockpiled in this damaged community: bereavement and segregation are responsible for the bitterness, anger and hatred generated by the Troubles which have augmented the existing repositories of historical recrimination.

Given all that, where is the hope for peace? The answer lies essentially in the proposition that the Troubles have provided not just misery, but also an education. The argument is that lessons have been learned the hard way, and that such lessons are often the most valuable of all.

It has been established that both sides have developed self-replicating paramilitary structures, with a flow of recruits ready to replace those imprisoned or killed. Neither the IRA nor the loyalists were actually compelled to go on ceasefire; both could have fought on.

Yet both seem to have been affected by the widespread feeling that, while more years of terrorism were possible, they were unlikely to advance the cause of either. Both sides proved their ability to kill and to suffer losses; yet along the way the feeling took root that neither would achieve eventual victory.

The air became permeated with a sense of mutual unbeatability. And the stalemate and stand-off gradually gave way to an understanding, in many quarters, that if victory was not in prospect then the logic pointed to some sort of negotiated settlement. To this was added a palpable sense of relief that while the war could go on for ever, it might not have to, and that a retreat from terrorism, if it could be effected

without loss of face, was highly desirable.

As with so much else of the political agenda since the late Sixties, the peace process developed from the Irish nationalist side. It was therefore hardly surprising that it was regarded with much suspicion and scepticism by Unionists.

It still is, though it has had a deep effect on the thinking of many Protestants. Those most opposed were senior Unionist politicians, some of whom were clearly more comfortable dealing with the IRA's terrorism than with Sinn Fein's political gambits.

But Unionist political denunciation of the peace process does not tell the whole story of the present Protestant state of mind. Most senior loyalist paramilitants, for example, now approve of that process: this does not mean that they are about to buy rounds of drinks for Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, but the years of imprisonment and loss of colleagues have produced an empathy with the republicans. This has translated into a willingness to talk to Sinn Fein.

Most of the Protestant population seem to favour engagement in talks together with Sinn Fein. Although many believe that the republicans should continue to be held at one remove, this is in itself a remarkable state of affairs, since in the last five years no major Unionist political figure has advocated negotiations with Sinn Fein.

Thus Protestants at large have become more flexible than their political leaders, and willing to contemplate steps that are without precedent in their history.

It also seems to show that something of the philosophy behind the peace process, principally that a settlement which excludes a significant section is unlikely to work, is taking root.

The trick in the negotiations ahead may be to amplify this still controversial premise into one of the central foundations of a new political dispensation. Sinn Fein is not about to get a united Ireland; Unionism is not about to get a strengthened union with Britain. The only logical common ground would therefore seem to lie in an equality agenda, in which the rights of all were protected.

But there is a long way to go before it comes to that. The political talks are due to reconvene in Belfast on 15 September. Assuming the IRA ceasefire holds, Sinn Fein will be there, leaving David Trimble to decide whether or not to take the Ulster Unionists into the same conference room as Sinn Fein. The betting is that he will not lead his party into the same room, but the betting is also that he will not walk away from the process.

The immediate outcome could therefore be proximity talks, a form of dialogue at a distance. But the talks will go ahead, whatever format Tony Blair having laid down that he wants agreement by May of next year. Few believe that he will get it, but by May it should be apparent whether real engagement is taking place.

If, however, the talks remain bogged down in the all-too-familiar procedural trench warfare, the Government may resort to the option of thrashing out a new agreement with Dublin, to be presented to the parties at a later date. Nobody wants to talk up the idea that the talks are doomed to failure, but it has to be pointed out that so many previous rounds of inter-party talks did not succeed. (The sole exception in 1974, produced an agreement that lasted less than six months.)

But the optimists contend that this time it could be different. For one thing, the strength of Labour's majority and the fact that it is likely to be in power for at least two terms gives Tony Blair an authority that John Major lacked. For another, all the previous negotiations took place in an atmosphere of continuing violence; the expectations of the two communities were low, and those parties who exhibited intransigence suffered no electoral penalty for doing so.

This time, the theory goes, there could be a new magic ingredient: peace. Assuming that the ceasefires hold, there will be progressively more confidence in them, and steadily increasing hope that they can be maintained. In these circumstances the parties might experience more and more communal compulsion to stay at the table and do real business. The public mood would be against walk-outs and obstructiveness, since these could endanger the peace.

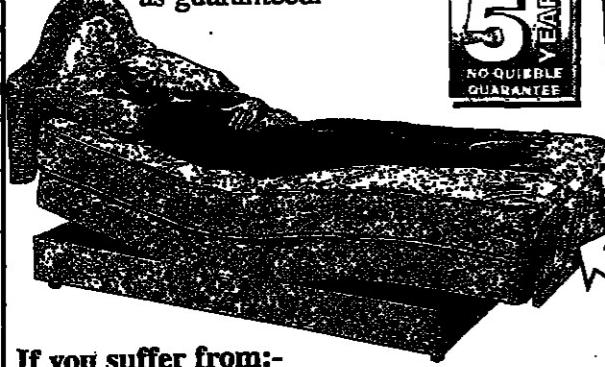
Conflicts of nationality are notoriously difficult to settle, and there is still no precise answer in sight to the question of how to reconcile a tradition which wants to be Irish with another which is determined to stay British. Huge questions remain on how far Unionism and nationalism may be prepared to compromise.

But five years ago few dreamt that it could get as far as this, with ceasefires in place and talks in prospect. There will undoubtedly be much turbulence ahead, but there could also be a powerful new sentiment from the grass-roots. This is a feeling that while their Unionism and their nationalism are important, so, too, is the necessity of hatching out the type of deal necessary to ensure that the war does not break out all over again.



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Not being in Edinburgh is so hard to capture

I am suffering from slight withdrawal symptoms at the moment. This is a mild ailment caused by withdrawing from the Edinburgh Festival and going somewhere else while it happens. It is triggered by switching on the radio or TV and listening to someone saying what a great time they are having at the Edinburgh Festival. This is especially true of switching on Ned Sherrin's *Loose Ends*, which sounds all the year round as if it is being broadcast direct from a bar in Edinburgh, but sounds even more so at festival time.

Yet why anyone ever broadcasts programmes from the Edinburgh Festival I have no idea. The programme planners must think that because everyone is having such great fun at Edinburgh it is only fair to share it with the rest of the nation, but this idea involves two great errors of judgement. One, it assumes that you can give some idea of the fun going on. Two, it assumes that the rest of the nation gives a toss about the Edinburgh Festival. In fact it is almost

impossible to give any idea of what it is like to be at the Edinburgh Festival, especially if you're having a good time. The Edinburgh experience is something that builds up through days of sleeplessness, acute parking problems, ticket hassles, inspired word-of-mouth hints, unexpectedly wonderful theatre, late night drinking, early morning hangovers, acute ironing problems, hilarious people you've never heard of, dull famous people, great music, snatched sandwiches, health-threatening meat pies ...

This is not something easily captured on TV or radio. And when the media do try to capture this, they either try to plug straight into the excitement, which is a bit like being phoned by someone at a wild party (you can HEAR how exciting it all is down the line without getting any effect from it, except perhaps depression), or they present little bits of acts in front of a captive audience with a chatty presenter, which is like being taken to a restaurant and being given one spoonful of lots of different dishes. It wouldn't work in a restaurant and it doesn't work on TV. In fact it is almost

impossible. On stage last year, that is. He rambled around in a controlled, discursive Irish way from subject to subject, like a pinball machine in slow motion, gradually weaving a hypnotic pattern, sounding a bit drunk but thinking very soberly. Over 60 minutes it built up powerfully and I came away thinking, This man is good – too good to be lumbered with the Perrier award. (I am convinced that getting the Perrier does no good to anyone. Where has Dylan Moran been in the year of his title-holding? I have not seen his name anywhere.)

On TV, however, he was not great. He just did a few minutes of amiable Irish ramble and could have been anyone. What he does on stage is not designed to be quick-fire or snappy – quite the opposite – so why anyone thought a short extract of him would work on TV I cannot begin to understand. But then I cannot begin to understand why anyone thinks the Edinburgh Festival is worth bringing to the nation at all. Not only is it an impossible task, but it is a thankless task. The Edinburgh Festival,

especially the Fringe, is a huge private party, and there is no way you can transmit the flavour of a private party. Admittedly it is attended by hundreds of thousands of people, but it is none the less a private party. I have been to many of them as a performer, and enjoyed them all tremendously, but I have never been able to describe adequately to anyone who has never been there what it is like (and do not need to, with people who have been there) and I do not believe any TV or radio programme has ever come close either.

I blush to find that I am as guilty as the next man of trying to turn my experience into words, because I find, looking back, that when I am at the festival I do write about it and I do try to convey the flavour of it and I do, doubtless, fail. And this year I am not there, and yet here I am writing about it once more. Worse, I am actually writing a piece about what it's like NOT to be at the festival.

God forgive me, the Edinburgh Withdrawal disease is even more pernicious than I thought it was.



Miles Kington

The wisest thing to do if you are not at the festival is to ignore the fact that it is going on at all. This is a difficult thing to do, and I must admit that I have given in to temptation. I tuned in to BBC's *Edinburgh Nights* last week in an effort to give myself some instant nostalgia, and through the hit and miss camera work I actually recognised an act which I had previously seen in the flesh. It was Dylan Moran, last year's Perrier award winner, whom I saw in Edinburgh a year ago, on the last day before he won the award.

But then I cannot begin to understand why anyone thinks the Edinburgh Festival is worth bringing to the nation at all. Not only is it an impossible task, but it is a thankless task. The Edinburgh Festival,

Rum-ti-tu

It is safe to say that the Edinburgh Festival is a unique and special event. It is a celebration of arts, culture, and community. It is a place where people from all walks of life can come together and experience something truly special. The festival is a reminder that there is still hope and beauty in the world, and that we should珍惜 every moment of it.

Why the party's still not over for the Oasis über-lads

"All my people. Right Here. Right Now. D'ya know what I mean?" sneers Liam as the pre-planned stage invasion starts. He takes off his shades and does his moody bastard stare into the camera. "Oh my God, he's so ... old," screams the adolescent girl curled up on the sofa watching *Top of the Pops* with me. "No wonder he's got to wear sunglasses. He's got ... lines," my daughter adds. (Actually, Liam only seems to have the one line – the "mad for it" line – but still it's true that, at 24, he's not as young as he used to be.)

Oasis past it? How could I suggest such a thing. Here they are. Now. With their difficult third album, with their girlfriends' "lets out for the lads" tabloid antics and broadsheets such as *The Observer* turning into Oasis fanzines and their free promos on BBC – is there anybody out there who doesn't like them? Jesus probably loves them. Certainly Tony Blair does. The kids in the street like them. As the other Liam, the anti-Liam, Liam Howlett of The Prodigy says, "My Dad likes Oasis." Everybody's Dad likes Oasis. This is consensus rock. No dissidents or backlashes will be tolerated. Everyone likes Oasis in the way that everyone likes Tony Blair. It is not so much that these guys are great in themselves, but that they remind us of greatness. Obviously I preferred the band before they were famous, just as I liked Blair more when he was less certain of power. But then, having grown out of politics, I'm at that awkward age where I still think that music matters.

If it were just music we were talking about then we would have to admit that the first Oasis album was better than the second, the second better than the third. But it would not do to start rumours of national decline just yet, for Oasis, as we know, are bigger than music. They are a phenomenon. This is why excited hacks have been revealing to us for some time now their exclusive sneak previews of *Be Here Now*. The fact is that anyone who has been listening to pop music for the last 30 years has had a sneak preview of *Be Here Now*.

Still, we must take it all seriously for, unlike the nastily commercial Spice Girls, Oasis are a proper rock group. They are blokes for a start: über-lads, certifiable protos who wear their class credentials on their album sleeves. They have nicked and been nicked. They like football and blondes and stardom and their mum. They are sullen louts with genuine working-class aspirations – crash a car into a swimming pool outside a rock-star mansion. There is no point in saying that it's all been done before. They know that and they "don't give a shit".

Nor is there any use in complaining about the dumbing down of rock music, because dumbness can be a virtue. Give me Noel's dumbest, purest lyrics ("I'm feeling supersonic/Give me gin and tonic") over his mock-meaningful stuff any day ("I've found a key upon the floor/Maybe you and I will never believe the things we find behind the door"). As long as Noel can write a song like "Live Forever" he can be forgiven. What does matter, though, are their aspirations beyond music, which are not so much dumb as completely narrow. Despite their love of The Beatles, there is no comparison. They do not appear interested in ideas, in other worlds, in



Suzanne Moore
The new album's worse than the second, which was worse than the first, but who cares? All Liam's people know what he means

heart got sick of trying to encapsulate the history of jazz, blues and rock'n'roll into four bars, he bowed out and went back to live in the desert. Oasis simply pare everything down to a vague though emotionally heightened experience.

Their trump card is understanding how it feels to be in a crowd at a football match or at a rave, that feeling of inclusion for those who often feel excluded. They tap straight into a kind of collectivity, a dominant sense of belonging, so that everyone who sings along to an Oasis song feels that they are part of a select but anointed group that somehow stands in opposition to the rest of the world. In reality it doesn't take much to be one of Noel and Liam's "people", as the majority of the population like them, but still we are supposed to feel faintly flattered by this cosmic sentiment.

What Oasis are in opposition to is somewhat vague. It is clearly not the Establishment, or money. As class warriors they are truly Thatcher's children, who think that individual attitude rather than love is all you need. I don't begrudge them their success or their excess. It's just that I cannot equate "cool" with cocktails with the Prime Minister. Don't believe the hype. Oasis are the most astonishingly uncontroversial rock band ever, as everyone agrees, they are "quite good".

The best deconstruction of the brothers Gallagher I ever saw was performed by two little boys with a karaoke machine. Wearing their Dad's sunglasses, these two kids just stood on stage mouthing the words to "Wonderwall". They didn't move, they didn't change their expressions; they just kept their cagoules zipped up tight against the outside world, imaging the whole time that they were the real thing. The audience loved them.

Rum-ti-tum, the heartbeat of a nation

The train jolted its way up the side of the hills into the Peak District. At the heart of the unimpressive fell-tops, capped in a hollow, lies Buxton. It is a small spa town of solidity and decency whose Georgian architecture is on a reassuringly human scale. In the cautious conservatory of its winter gardens, holiday-makers eat Swiss roll and read *The Daily Telegraph*. The shop sells tea towels imprinted with the words of "Bless this House" or "My Kitchen Prayer", which begins: "Bless my little kitchen, Lord I love it in every nook..."

If the outside world is knocking at its door, Buxton doesn't need to know. It is safe and old-fashioned and English in the way that Gilbert and Sullivan are. It was just the right venue for the fourth International G&S festival (last year's winners: the South Anglia Savoy Players – Lord/Lord)

It was the big day for the Bournemouth G&S Society. At 9am Paul, a 54-year-old solicitor who had taken the week off work, was already backstage erecting the set and lighting rig for the society's production of *The Yeoman of the Guard*. He has been doing stage lighting for more than 20 years. "You start work before the rest of the company get here, and when they go home you are still here to take it all down," he said. But his enthusiasm seemed undimmed.

By 11am the company had arrived and were sitting in the Victorian splendour of the Matcham theatre, all cream and gold and blue drapes. "Pacing is everything today," Roberta Morrell, their director, announced. "Remember you have to peak at 7.30pm." Roberta, a professional employed by Bournemouth to mark their 50th anniversary production,

had put the cast through a gruelling three weeks of solid rehearsals. "Remember you do this for pleasure, don't lose sight of that fact."

As if. The capacity for innocent enjoyment is integral to G&S. That much was evident from the moment the rehearsal began. It is not just that the splendid rum-ti-tum of Sullivan's music offers endless opportunity for arm-swinging gusto. (Amateurs love G&S, because you're supposed to be hammy.) Or that the wilful ahistoricity of Gilbert's Ruritanian flummery fulfils even the most extravagant childhood dreams for dressing up.

No, in the wings, too, there were endless opportunities for merriment. Yeomen Roger filled me in on the role of treasurer. He collected members' subs (£15 a year) and handled ticket sales (£30 a good show such as *The Mikado*, *Pinafore*, *Pirates* or *The Gondoliers*). He has done it for 10 years. It was a bit of a busman's holiday – he is finance director for a Dorset brewery – but he met his wife through it. "Both second marriages," he said as he nipped back on stage.

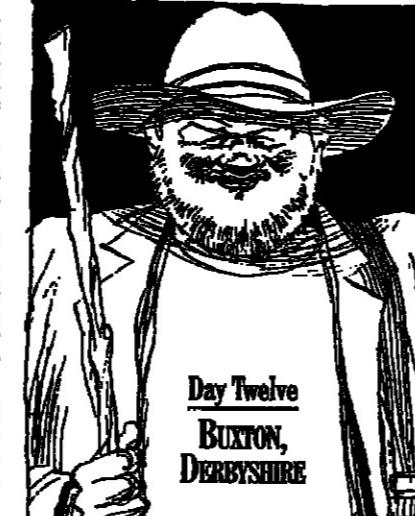
"Who's looking after the props?" inquired a stranger. "Bernard," I heard myself say. "They're on the other side." It was catching, this sense of participation.

"You can sometimes feel like a hamster on a wheel," said Robin, who played the Sergeant, but was in reality a retired major with the Royal Engineers. It's not just the rehearsals, said his wife, Vicki, who is in the chorus, there are the concerts at the Ringwood Conservative Association, the dinner dance, the quizzes, the Anything-But-G&S night, the barbecues, garden parties and cream teas.

Bournemouth G&S, it must be said, is a bit short of the under-45s.

"The kids would rather be in *Grease*.

A JOURNEY AROUND THE WHOLE ISLAND OF GREAT BRITAIN



WITH PAUL VALLEY

The minister returns to a sticky wicket

Fran Abrams talks to Chris Smith

Apparently, Chris Smith is seriously disenchanted. How one is supposed to discern this on meeting him is not immediately clear, as he is charm personified. Barely a crabby word crosses his lips during our interview in his vast office overlooking Trafalgar Square, but still the fact of his crossness hangs in the air like a warning.

Something has gone awry on the news management front and *The Independent*, in particular, has given cause for displeasure. The cause of this, however, is the coverage over the past few days of Mr Smith's plans for an academy of sporting excellence. More particularly, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is stung by the suggestion in our leader column on Wednesday that he has displayed symptoms of on-the-hoof policy formulation, of adopting off-the-cuff solutions that threaten to become problems of their own.

The sequence of events is as follows. Late last week the *Independent on Sunday*, along with other papers, is briefed on the principles which will govern the new academy. It runs a story on its front page saying that team games such as rugby, cricket and football will lose out, as individual and non-commercial sports are to be put at the centre of the project. That morning Mr Smith is interviewed on Radio 4, and says that athletes in the Olympic sports are among those most in need of support.

Lord MacLaurin, chairman of



Glyn Griffiths

the England and Wales Cricket Board, is interviewed by David Frost on the same day and without having seen full details of the proposals says that if cricket is to lose out, he wants greater freedom to raise money through TV deals. Mr Smith says later that he will be prepared to discuss the matter.

In the meantime, it emerges that in fact the cricket board is already planning its own academy and is not particularly upset by being left off the list for the Government's version. It also emerges that cricket, along with other team sports, will be able to use the centre's facilities for sports science, research, medicine and nutrition.

Following this rigmorole, Mr Smith was widely accused of vacillation, and of denying cricket, football and rugby access to lottery money while spending millions on volleyball and synchronised swimming. Now he wants to "set the record straight".

"What we were trying to set out was the basic philosophy as to what the academy is there to do," he says. "It is about excellence; it is about turning amateurs into world-class competitors; it is about giving our best athletes the best chance. It isn't

about excluding any sports; it is about doing what's best for each individual sport." Rugby, cricket and football will all receive their own support from the lottery, he adds.

At the heart of the academy, he says, will be the academic and medical facilities which all sports can share. Other countries already have these, while Britain lags behind. Labour said so as long ago as May 1996, when it published its policy on sport.

"Suggesting that we wanted to exclude cricket and then that we had done some sort of rapid U-turn on the subject is actually complete nonsense. We have been saying this all along," he says.

In fact, once Lord MacLaurin had been equipped with the full facts at a meeting with Mr Smith on Monday, peace and harmony broke out. The cricket board chairman had even agreed that he did not want to

Mr Smith, for the record, supports Arsenal: "I am a keen football fan and a rather poor football player. I kick a ball around a little bit, but I am not up to prime ministerial standard," he says, referring to Mr Blair's apparent penchant for getting his boots out at the first hint of an opportunity.

So, M'lud, are the media guilty as charged? Certainly, there does seem to have been some slack-handedness on the Government's part. For a start, the emphasis has changed since Labour announced its policy last year, despite protestations from Mr Smith that it has not. Then the central academy was to be mainly for medicine and so on, while the training centres were to be scattered around the country. Now many of those facilities are to be at the centre, after all.

And there still is uncertainty about whether the position the Secretary of State took at the weekend is the final one. During our conversation it emerged that he had asked the four Sports Councils for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for advice on the exact form the academy should take – how many of its facilities should be at the centre and how many in the regions, and which sports it should concentrate on. A final decision would be taken around the end of September, he said, after these deliberations and further conversations with other sporting bodies were complete.

A question still hangs, too, over precisely what the minister was trying to do when he briefed the media over the weekend. He says he wanted to set out the principles behind the new academy, but why now? He could, for example, have waited until the process was complete, by which time the Minister for Sport would have been back from his holidays.

It is, of course, possible that Mr Smith felt the need for some good publicity in the wake of suggestions that his first 100 days had not been an unmitigated success. If so, things could not have gone more horribly wrong. He now says he had all the facts up his sleeve at the weekend, and that he gave some of them to the press but they were not reported. He knew the cricket board wanted its own academy; that there would be more lottery cash for team sports; that the centre's facilities would be largely open to all. Somehow the message did not come across. So, shoot the messenger?

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COMMENT

'Where did all these stories come from that the two sides were close to agreeing the go-ahead on the same terms? The finger must obviously point towards the arbs, who have big money riding on such an outcome'

Already in a pickle over the BT/MCI merger, the arbitrageurs were put even more heavily in the red yesterday by a statement of clarification from the two sides. Far from being close to resolving their differences and ploughing ahead with the merger on the original terms, it appears the two companies are still poles apart. BT is continuing to push for renegotiation of the terms, to take account of the unexpectedly high costs of MCI's assault on the local telephone market in the US, and MCI is refusing to countenance any such thing.

It was a statement quite at odds with what has generally been appearing in the press over the past week or so. Fearing that the market was being manipulated into believing the wrong thing, that's why BT put it out. So where did all these stories come from that the two sides were close to agreeing the go-ahead on the same terms? The finger must obviously point towards the arbs, who have big money riding on such an outcome.'

On the face of it, this was a deal that looked like an arbitrageur's dream. Because there was some possibility that regulators would scupper the deal, MCI stock was trading at a discount to the value of BT's share offer. Buying MCI and shorting BT therefore looked like a sure-fire way to make money. From George Soros to Goldman Sachs and Salomon, every arb worth the name has been playing the opportunity for all its worth.

Then with MCI's spot of bother in local telecommunications, it all went horribly

wrong. With BT threatening to pull out if the terms were not renegotiated, it suddenly looked as if the deal really wouldn't happen after all. Since then, it has obviously been in the interests of the arbs to talk down this possibility. The more the market believes it will happen, and on the same terms as before, the better the chance of unwinding these positions without serious loss.

If that is what was happening, it has badly backfired. The effect of yesterday's statement was to send MCI stock slumping even further and BT shares soaring, putting the arbs even more seriously into loss. Nobody is going to shed much of a tear for the punishment Mr Soros and others are taking. This "risk" arbitrage, after all, and big losses come as much with the territory as big profits.

But it does rather point up the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction in markets these days. Perhaps it was ever thus. The existence of such big players in the markets, however, does seem to have made it rather worse. The market speculation and press reports that had BT pushing ahead on the same terms in return for a rethink of MCI's investment strategy seem to have been just plain wrong. So wrong, in fact, that BT's lawyers had to insist on a statement of clarification being made to the Stock Exchange.

So what is going to happen? The odds on this merger going ahead at all seem to have lengthened quite markedly following yesterday's statement. If BT is still pushing for lower terms, the implication is it no longer

thinks MCI is worth what it was originally offering. MCI plainly thinks otherwise and is sticking to its guns.

It would be a dreadful humiliation for Sir Ian Vallance and Sir Peter Bonfield to pull out altogether, but by the same token they will be punished for overpaying. Since MCI seems to be in no mood for compromises, it is hard to see how this impasse might be resolved. One way or another, both the big proposed transatlantic business alliances - British Airways with American Airlines, and British Telecom with MCI - seem to be running into the sands.

Raising pensions for all is not a sensible idea

Newspapers will always need something to sustain them through the barren summer months: the Whiteman policy option document generally makes a reliable fallback. However absurd or whimsical the idea, a civil servant will at some stage have written a paper on it, thus allowing newspapers to write, with truth, that ministers have considered it. Thus we had the *Guardian* this week splashing a story that ministers were considering reintroducing the state pension's link with growth in average earnings. This was abolished in 1980 by Margaret Thatcher in favour of a simple link to prices.

Earnings tend to rise faster than price inflation, so it actually makes quite a dif-

ference. The basic state pension would now be 32 per cent higher than it is had the earnings link been maintained.

Since Lady Castle and other Old Labour troopers have been lobbying for restoration of this perk ever since Mrs Thatcher removed it, Harriet Harman was almost bound to consider it as part of her pensions review. This is the sort of thing that sends civil servants wild with frustration, for it amounts to an instruction to cost and draw up proposals for funding something ministers are never likely to do. Or at least if they are going to do it, they will truly have lost their marbles.

This is not just because of its costs, or because it would go against what every other government in Europe is doing. In an effort to get to grips with the rocketing costs of pensions, even Germany is in the process of removing the link with earnings. As it happens, the cost of restoring the link in Britain, although high, is not prohibitive, if only because state pension benefits are so miserly.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the effect would be to raise the cost of the state pension by 2030 from £42bn annually to £73bn.

Though this sounds a lot, it shouldn't make any difference to the taxpayer; as a proportion of income, the costs of funding the state pension remain broadly the same ignoring demographic factors, since incomes will be rising at the same rate as the pension. As things presently stand the cost of the state

pension as a proportion of income will shrink quite significantly.

So in theory this is by no means an unaffordable thing to do. But is it something anyone would want to do? If the Government is going to raise an extra £30bn a year, does it really want to spend it on the basic state pension?

Obviously not. The spread of wealth and income among pensioners these days broadly mirrors the spread elsewhere in society. There are well-off pensioners, for whom this change would make little difference, badly off pensioners, for whom it would make some difference, and poverty-stricken pensioners, for whom it would make a sizeable difference.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the way to tackle the pensions problem is not through pay-as-you-go state arrangements, but through the introduction of some form of compulsion in the savings market. Plainly the benefits of any compulsory funded arrangements are going to take time to feed through to the pensioner's pocket.

In the meantime the Government needs to find ways of targeting state benefit at less well-off pensioners. Raising the basic state pension for all beyond the rate of inflation is not a sensible use of government money. And to tell the truth, the poor civil servant instructed to draw up this particular policy option document will already know that a snowball in Hades would stand a better chance than this of seeing the light of day.

US insurers to sue SmithKline for overcharging

Sameena Ahmad

SmithKline Beecham yesterday denied that it defrauded 37 private US health insurers who plan to sue the drugs giant for up to US\$1.5bn in damages for overcharging them for health tests. However analysts yesterday said they expected SmithKline to settle out of court for a much smaller sum.

The lawsuit against SmithKline's US-based clinical laboratories division comes six months after the company paid \$325m in an out-of-court settlement with the US government insurers Medicare and Medicaid for overcharging. The private insurance companies are suing SmithKline under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act. Under this act, they are accusing SmithKline of corruption and a deliberate intention to defraud.

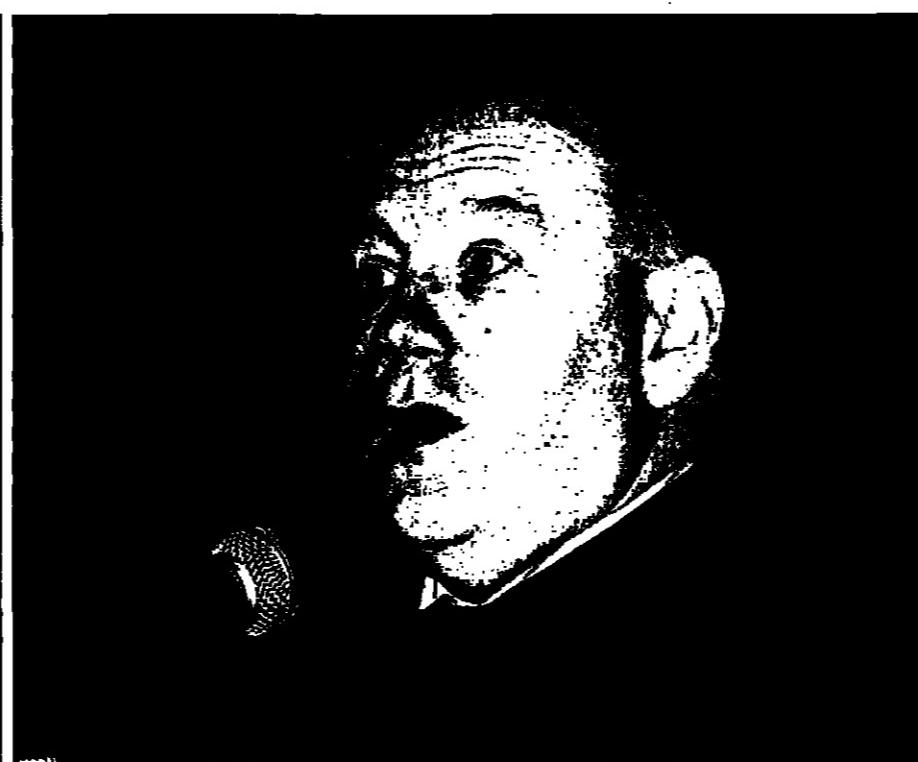
A spokesman for SmithKline said: "We rigorously deny that we intended to defraud any insurance company. We think the claims in this suit are grossly exaggerated and the legal bases for recovery are highly questionable."

SmithKline emphasised that

since the Medicare case, its practices had changed: "There is new management in clinical labs, all our practices and claim forms have been improved. We are working closely with people so as not to fall foul again."

Analysts dismissed the issue as a storm in a teacup. Mark Brewer at Hoare Govett said: "It's overblown. The only surprising thing about this is the number of companies suing SB last year that it expected more litigation after Medicaid." Mr Brewer said the company, which announced a \$400m provision to cover litigation at clinical labs, would settle out of court, probably for \$130m-\$140m, the amount of the provision remaining after the US government settlement plus a future tax rebate.

These insurance companies will find it very difficult to prove in court both that SB was intent on defrauding them and was a corrupt organisation. SB has made it clear that it has this pool of money that is fair and reasonable. If these companies don't want to take it, they could face protracted litigation and lose everything," said Mr Brewer.



John McGuckian: Bought 4 million shares for more than £8m Photograph: PACEAKER

Ulster TV directors buy £9m shares to thwart bid

Cathy Newman

Ulster Television's directors yesterday moved to stave off a possible hostile bid from Scottish Media by spending more than £9m buying just over 8 per cent of the company's shares.

Ulster also announced it was considering returning the majority of its £12m cash pile to investors through a share buy-back. However Scottish Media retaliated by stepping up the pressure on Ulster and increasing its stake in the group to 18.2 per cent from just under 15 per cent.

Ulster held a board meeting on Wednesday, where the directors decided to bring forward the announcement of the company's interim results in the

light of Scottish Media's raid on its shares last week, when it purchased 13.1 per cent of Ulster.

It is thought the directors decided to buy more shares because they feared Scottish would look to increase its stake further.

John McGuckian, Ulster's chairman, was the biggest buyer, purchasing 4 million shares at a cost of more than £8m.

Under Takeover Panel rules,

Scottish was prevented from buying further shares for seven days after last week's down raid that time limit expired yesterday, and Scottish took the chance to increase its shareholding. Scottish refused to rule out the possibility of a full bid.

One analyst said: "It's a little bit of macho posturing, but ultimately they could buy back

the whole company. Scottish has certainly had a slap in the face on this one."

There was intense speculation last night about how the directors were financing the purchases. One analyst said the cash repayment arising from a share buy-back could be used to cover interest costs incurred by the directors if they had borrowed money to buy the shares.

However, Desmond Smyth, Ulster's managing director, said there was no link between the buy-back and the directors' share purchases. The directors collectively now own 10.6 per cent of the company.

Ulster announced a 22 per cent decline in pre-tax profits to £3.64m for the half year to June.

Forget the MBA. All you need is common sense

It has become fashionable of late for business people to quip that the latest management fad is anti-faddism. After years of suffering total quality, customer service, business process re-engineering and the rest, they seem to be relieved by the thought that none of this stuff really works and that they can therefore call off the hunt for the Holy Grail.

But that, of course, is to misread the signals. The point is not that re-engineering or quality is total nonsense; it is just that neither can solve a company's problems in isolation. Just as managers should not adhere rigidly to the texts devoted to each idea, so they should not dismiss them out of hand.

After all, much of the content in these theories is based in solid common sense. Of course a manufacturer should make good-quality goods rather than shoddy ones. Of course businesses need to not just satisfy but delight their customers. Of course they need to constantly re-evaluate how they do things as the prophets of re-engineering insist. Where they typically go wrong is in putting all their energies into, first, one idea and then another and so on.

Smarter companies that are not particularly associated with any one of these ideas do not ignore them altogether, but pick and choose from them what they feel is appropriate. As an executive with one such organisation said recently: "I think we've tried just about everything over the years."

In recent years, various gurus have tried to explain why these businesses seem to have more staying power than those that appear to be forever chasing rainbows. And most have come to the conclusion that it is all

BOOK REVIEW

founders of some of the most successful businesses of the century - for example, Dave Packard of computer company Hewlett-Packard, Alcoa Morita of electronics company Sony and Sam Walton of Wal-Mart - never received an MBA, they argue that this supports their contention that there is something "more fundamental at the core of organisational success than the theories found in business schools, management books and consulting reports". These executives, they add, were "not just people of action, but people of thought - critical thought". And it can be concluded that the critical thinking they brought to their businesses was more effective than that of their counterparts elsewhere.

Of the numerous examples

that pepper this book, one of the most compelling is the story of how the US motor manufacturer, Chrysler, dealt with a

informative:

With effect from 22 August 1997 the following interest rates will apply:

Premier Cheque Account

	From	To
Overdraft Rate	% p.a.	% EAR
Agreed overdraft for balances up to £10,000	9.75%	10.1%

High Interest Savings Account (including 30 Day Account)

Credit Interest	Gross %	Gross CAR %	Net CAR %
£1 to £2,499	4.25%	4.33%	3.40%
£2,500 to £24,999	4.75%	4.85%	3.80%
£25,000 and over	5.25%	5.37%	4.20%

Direct Interest Savings Account (including 30 Day Account)

Credit Interest	Gross %	Gross CAR %	Net CAR %
£1 to £999	0.50%	0.50%	0.40%
£1,000 to £2,499	4.50%	4.57%	3.64%
£2,500 to £4,999	5.25%	5.35%	4.20%
£5,000 to £49,999	6.40%	6.55%	5.12%
£50,000 and over	6.75%	6.82%	5.40%

Gross CAR is the true gross/net return if the interest rates are retained in the account.
Net: the rate after the deduction of tax applicable to interest on savings, currently 20%.

CAR: Computed Annual Rate is the true gross/net return if the interest rates are retained in the account.

Roger Trapp

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Notice to Cardholders of Interest Change

Due to the change in Base Rate from 6.75% to 7.00% your RBS Advanta Card interest rate for Purchases and Cash Advances will be amended accordingly from the first day of next month. Your interest rate margin over

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business

Halifax in same league as Lloyds

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

The statistics surrounding the flotation of Halifax make impressive reading. It was the biggest expansion of share ownership, 50 million letters were mailed out during the conversion process, and it has the largest single-company PEP with 283,000 customers.

Against that backdrop, a 9 per cent rise in first-half profits to £802m and no interim dividend might be seen as a bit of an anti-climax.

As Jon Foulds, the chairman, points out however, the first half was a truly exceptional period and the headline figures are a bit of an irrelevance. Not only did the period include the conversion and flotation, it also closely followed the acquisition of Clerical & Medical, the first of probably several attempts to diversify away from Halifax's traditional building society borrowing and lending business.

For the record, earnings per share rose 8.2 per cent to 21.2p and total assets increased by 6.8 per cent to £12.3bn. The shares, which have done precious little since flotation in June, closed 8.5p lower at 72.75p.

The small print makes interesting reading, though, especially the details of Halifax's return on equity. On the face of it, the new bank made 14.6 per cent on its capital in the first half, strip out the £3.5bn of surplus capital looking for a home and the underlying return was a more exciting 27 per cent.

That puts Halifax in the same league as Lloyds TSB, its most obvious rival, but still way shy of the 40 per cent that bank achieved in the first six months of the year. Halifax's aim of becoming Britain's leading supplier of personal financial services will hinge on how well it spends its idle capital and whether it can narrow the gap with the industry's benchmark company.

Mike Blackburn, its chief executive, spelled out a 10-year plan to bring its non-mortgage and savings business up to 50 per cent of the total. As it contributes only 25 per cent currently, that will involve some large acquisitions by its life assurance, pensions and general insurance businesses. Unfortunately it's hard to hide a £3.5bn war chest and everyone has seen Halifax coming, driving prices in the sector sky-high.

The other restraint on the share price will be a sense of wait and see about the management ability of its senior executives, which was apparently justified by a spate of lax lending last year in the unsecured loans book.

That said, long-term investors can hardly go wrong with Halifax. It is a leading player, with an enormously strong brand name, in a fast-growing industry and it has the balance sheet strength to take advantage of the sector's consolidation.

On the basis of forecast pre-tax profit-

its of £1.62bn for the full year, the shares currently trade on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 17. One to tuck away and forget.

A profit warning worth re-reading

On the surface, Quarto's profit warning yesterday looks forgivable – yet another sad case of currencyitis. With more than 80 per cent of the book publisher's revenues in non-sterling currencies, the rising US dollar against the German mark and strength of sterling knocked around £400,000 from interim profits and will affect full-year numbers.

And even yesterday's profits crash – £1.6m to £500,000, in the six months to June – was, in itself, less alarming than it appeared. Of the 3 per cent decline in margin, around half was blamed on currency, and the rest to higher sales and marketing costs and unfortunate timing which resulted in fewer new titles in the period. In any case, Quarto makes the bulk of its profits in the last quarter of the year.

But a closer look suggests there are

more fundamental problems. Even excluding yesterday's 28.5p fall to 155p, Quarto's shares have underperformed the market by 58 per cent over the past year.

Quarto makes its money by producing and selling books to publishers, pre-selling at fixed prices. While Quarto makes tiny margins on the first round of publishing – print and production costs wipe out profit – where it has done well is the reprint market – half the group's revenues.

Reprints are cheap to produce and if Quarto can raise the original cover price, it can make a decent margin, typically 30 per cent gross.

The trick, though, is getting new book titles on to the shelves in the first place. In the US, over half of Quarto's total market, that has been the problem. There, the most important outlet for Quarto's books – how to paint, how to cook and gardening glossies – are discount book retailers. Fierce competition in that market has meant an oversupply of titles, with many being returned to publishers.

On the Continent prices of books in depressed economies such as France and Germany have slumped, squeezing Quarto's margins. Add the pressure of currency, which has made books 30

per cent more expensive, and things look tough for Quarto. On top, some of Quarto's big hope titles, like its children's fiction series, have bombed.

Tim Steer at house broker Merrill Lynch has sharply downgraded full-year forecasts from £7.8m to £5.5m. Though the shares are on a forward p/e ratio of 9 times, don't touch.

Maid's grandiose plan may pay off

Since floating his online information company three years ago, Dan Wagner, the colourful chief executive of Maid, has given investors a roller-coaster ride.

Unfortunately, the spills have far outweighed the thrills along the way. Shares in Maid have underperformed the stock market by 36 per cent over the past 12 months. In February, Mr Wagner was forced to issue a reassuring statement to try to arrest the decline in the company's share price.

Press speculation forced Maid into releasing a statement of an altogether different sort yesterday – that it is in discussions about a bid for Knight-Ridder Information, an online information provider.

The news is in keeping with Mr Wagner's partiality for the grandiose. Part of the US newspaper publishing giant Knight-Ridder, KR Information is four times the size of Maid in sales terms, reporting revenues of \$285m last year.

So would this be a good deal? Maid could stretch to a price tag of between £250m and £350m, around 1.5 to two times sales. Mr Wagner is keen to reassure shareholders that he will not overpay, but the company will probably have to pay for the deal with a combination of debt and shares.

If it comes off though, the acquisition could improve Maid's prospects. KR Information would give the company access to a large amount of content, which at the moment it has to buy in at a high price. There are also substantial synergies between the two businesses, and acquiring KR Information would give Maid a greater global presence than it has achieved alone.

Though the market was jittery about the size of this potential deal, marking Maid's shares 2p lower to 235p, analysts are already muttering about upgrading profit forecasts.

House broker ABN Amro Hoare Govett puts the company on a p/e multiple of 14.4 times for 1998. That compares with around 26 times for the media sector generally. If this deal comes off and the price is right, investors could see Maid's rating improve. A buy for the brave.

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Stock	Sell	Buy	Yld	Stock	Sell	Buy	Yld	Stock	Sell	Buy
ABN AMRO Panhandle Ltd	\$65	\$65		Consolidated Unit Tax Hldg Co Ltd	\$205	\$215	.00%	GAM Stg European Acc	\$26.01	\$26.00
57-61 Russell Road, London WC1B 4JH				Consolidated UT	\$207	\$211	.00%	GAM Intelligent Inc	\$26.15	\$26.15
Tel/Fax: 071 832 2244				Consolidated UT Acc	\$207	\$211	.00%	GAM Stg Income Acc	\$26.93	\$27.03
Panhandle UK Ltd	\$26.55	\$27.00	.0%	Cooke Meany Investment Funds Ltd	\$207	\$213	.00%	GAM M American Acc	\$27.03	\$27.03
Panhandle US Hold Acc	\$27.75	\$28.00	.0%	Arbitrage Growth	\$207.5	\$213	.00%	GAM M American Acc	\$27.24	\$27.24
Panhandle Europe	\$27.00	\$27.50	.0%	Arbitrage Income	\$208.0	\$215	.00%	GAM Per Inst Acc	\$27.45	\$27.45
Panhandle Ed Reps	\$24.31	\$24.50	.0%	Arbitrage Recovery	\$208.5	\$210.0	.00%	GAM Per Inst Acc	\$27.65	\$27.65
AXA Reality & Lease Unit Trust Management				HG Eastern Enterprises	\$209.0	\$204.0	.00%	GAM Per Inst Acc	\$27.85	\$27.85
AXA Reality & Lease Ltd, Corporation St, Canary Wharf				HG St. Securities	\$209.5	\$207.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$28.05	\$28.05
£1,000,000,000				Corporate Bonds Unit Tax Hldg Co Ltd	\$210.0	\$207.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$28.25	\$28.25
General Acc	\$26.0	\$26.0	.0%	Credit Suisse Investment Funds (UK)	\$210.5	\$214.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$28.45	\$28.45
General Cons	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Future Fund	\$211.0	\$213.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$28.65	\$28.65
UK Growth Acc	\$26.30	\$26.60	.0%	Future Fund Int	\$211.5	\$213.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$28.85	\$28.85
UK Growth Fund	\$26.30	\$26.60	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$212.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$29.05	\$29.05
High Yield Inc	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$212.5	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$29.25	\$29.25
Holder Inc Inc	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$213.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$29.45	\$29.45
Off/Pfd Ed Inc	\$26.20	\$26.50	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$213.5	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$29.65	\$29.65
Off/Pfd Inv Inc	\$26.00	\$26.30	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$214.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$29.85	\$29.85
Real Assets	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$214.5	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$30.05	\$30.05
Japan Stl Acc	\$24.50	\$23.00	.0%	Future Fund Inv	\$215.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$30.25	\$30.25
Pacific Basin Stl Acc	\$24.50	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp	\$215.5	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$30.45	\$30.45
Real Estate Acc	\$24.50	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp	\$216.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$30.65	\$30.65
Real Estate Inv Acc	\$24.50	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp	\$216.5	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$30.85	\$30.85
Global Corp	\$22.00	\$22.00	.0%	Global Corp	\$217.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$31.05	\$31.05
Balanced Acc	\$23.00	\$23.00	.0%	Global Corp	\$217.5	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$31.25	\$31.25
Retirement Acc	\$23.00	\$23.00	.0%	Global Corp	\$218.0	\$215.0	.00%	GAM UK Bond Fund	\$31.45	\$31.45
High Yield Fund Managers				Dimensional Fund Adviser Ltd				Global Corp	\$218.5	\$215.0
High Income	\$24.00	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp				Global Corp	\$219.0	\$215.0
Off/Pfd Fund Inv	\$24.00	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp				Global Corp	\$219.5	\$215.0
High Equity	\$24.00	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp				Global Corp	\$220.0	\$215.0
High Yield Fund	\$24.00	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp				Global Corp	\$220.5	\$215.0
Worldwide Fund	\$24.00	\$24.00	.0%	Global Corp				Global Corp	\$221.0	\$215.0
Capital Growth				Dimensionary Unit Fund Mgmt				Global Corp	\$221.5	\$215.0
American Growth	\$26.25	\$26.50	.0%	UK Small Cos	\$222.0	\$204.5	.00%	Global Corp	\$222.0	\$215.0
Amer & Int'l Growth	\$26.25	\$26.50	.0%	UK Small Cos	\$222.5	\$204.5	.00%	Global Corp	\$222.5	\$215.0
Capital Preservation Acc	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Dimensionary Unit Fund Mgmt				Global Corp	\$223.0	\$215.0
Euro Capital Acc	\$26.25	\$26.50	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$223.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$223.0	\$215.0
Euro Capital Inv	\$26.25	\$26.50	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$223.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$223.5	\$215.0
General	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$224.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$224.0	\$215.0
International	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$224.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$224.5	\$215.0
International & Growth	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$225.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$225.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$225.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$225.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$226.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$226.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$226.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$226.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$227.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$227.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$227.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$227.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$228.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$228.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$228.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$228.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$229.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$229.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$229.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$229.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$230.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$230.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$230.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$230.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$231.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$231.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$231.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$231.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$232.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$232.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$232.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$232.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$233.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$233.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$233.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$233.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$234.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$234.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$234.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$234.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$235.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$235.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$235.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$235.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$236.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$236.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$236.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$236.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$237.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$237.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$237.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$237.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$238.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$238.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$238.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$238.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$239.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$239.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$239.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$239.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$240.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$240.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$240.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$240.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$241.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$241.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$241.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$241.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$242.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$242.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$242.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$242.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$243.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$243.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$243.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$243.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$244.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$244.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$244.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$244.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$245.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$245.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$245.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$245.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$246.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$246.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$246.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$246.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$247.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$247.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$247.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$247.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$248.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$248.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$248.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$248.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$249.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$249.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$249.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$249.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$250.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$250.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$250.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$250.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$251.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$251.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$251.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$251.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$252.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$252.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$252.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$252.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$253.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$253.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$253.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$253.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$254.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$254.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$254.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$254.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$255.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$255.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$255.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$255.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$256.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$256.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$256.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$256.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$257.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$257.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$257.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$257.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$258.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$258.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$258.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$258.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$259.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$259.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$259.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$259.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$260.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$260.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$260.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$260.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$261.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$261.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$261.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$261.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$262.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$262.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$262.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$262.5	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$263.0	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$263.0	\$215.0
Global Growth & Div	\$26.00	\$26.00	.0%	Do Arrows Ltd	\$263.5	\$203.0	.00%	Global Corp	\$263.5	\$215.0</td

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UNIT TEST GUIDE

ex dividend
exit charge applies
when units are sold
formerly 'offer'
formerly 'bid'

100 Largest Insurance Funds			
Stock	Bid	Mid	Offer
Abbey Equity Ser 4	3069	3221	Stock
Abbey International Ser 4	2652	2582	London & Manchester Flexible Acc
Abbey Managed Ser 4	6711	6714	London Equity
Abbey National Managed	6271	6271	London Mixed
Abbey National Unit Bond	758	751	M & G Managed Bond Acc
Abbey Equity Acc Ser 2	2529	2684	M & G Recovery Bond Acc
Abbey Multiple Inv Acc E3	1357	1421	Mercantile Investors Managed
Allied Danmar Distribution Bond	2750	2800	Merkel Balanced
Allied Danmar Equity Acc	24230	26029	Midland UK Equity
Allied Danmar Gen 4 High Income Ser	4840	4840	Midland Growth Managed
Allied Danmar Managed Acc	1497	1503	Northern Society Mgd
Allied Danmar Managed Ser 2	7080	7400	Northern UK Equity
Axa Equity & Law Ser 5	47150	50000	Norwich Union Mngd Inv NLH MF
Axa Equity & Law Ser 5	12470	1440	Norwich Union Unlisted Managed
Axa Equity & Law UK Inv Ser 5	56300	56300	Norwich Union Unlisted Wrt Profity
Axa Equity & Law UK Eq Ser 2	14820	15430	NPI Managed
Barclays-Equity Acc	5419	5421	Pearl Equity Nat
Barclays-International Acc	7215	7215	Premier Fund Managed
Barclays Managed Acc	5054	5102	Prudential Preferred Managed
Barclays Managed Fund Ser 2	64534	65240	Royal Life Managed Inv Ser 2
Canada Managed Ser 2	60280	59240	Royal Life Managed Inv Ser 3
Citi/Fidt Equity	4030	4046	Royal Scottish Growth Managed
Citi/Fidt Superallocated Ser 2	3048	3048	Royal Scottish UK Equity
Citi Wm Profity Bond	738	738	Scottish Amicable Equity Ser 1
Confederation Equity I	24793	26103	Scottish Amicable Managed Ser 1
Commercial Union Unit Managed	5402	5587	Scottish Atlantic Mngd
Commercial Union UK Equity	7082	7442	Scottish Life Managed
Commercial Union Wrt Profit	1425	500	Scot Pwr Inv Blue Chip
Eight Step Managed Ser 2	2148	2222	Scot Pwr Inv Wrt Profit
Family Performance	584	5453	Scotish Widows International
Friends Provident Managed	4221	4513	Sovereign Managed
Friends Provident Ult Equity	5054	5013	Standard Equity
Friends Provident Wrt Profit	2074	2210	Standard European
GIA Profity Bond Ser 2	1555	1443	Standard Managed
GA Profity Managed Inv Crd	30587	3082	Standard Fund Investors
GA Profity Managed Inv Crd	9450	6788	Standard Managed
Gen Managed	2918	3029	Sax Aliance Equity
GPE Equity Acc	10494	10459	Sax Aliance Managed
GPE International Acc	9424	9513	Sax Life Deferred Distrbutor
GPE Managed Acc	50565	50513	Sax Life Distrbutor
HLI Serviced Equity	6264	6264	Sax Life Equity Acc
HLI Serviced Managed Ser A	7370	7783	Sax Life Managed Acc
Inv Life Global Mgd Prod Ser 3	7765	8727	Sax Life Century Eq
J P Morgan/SLI Plcce Mgd	2211	2212	Sax Life Cont Mngd Inv Eq Acc
Lancaster Impacted Mgt Acc	3698	3597	Sax Life Cont Mngd Life Eq Acc
Lancaster Impacted Inv Ser 3	7063	7214	Sax Life Cont Mngd Local Inv Acc
Lancaster UK Property Acc	6520	6682	Sax Equity
Legal & General Equity Acc	10318	11791	Sax Homebuyer
Legal & General International Acc	8580	7259	Sax Managed

YORK EBOR MEETING: A hair-raising ride in the Nunthorpe Stakes but might and mane help Darley to share the spoils

Greaves in a feminine conquest

RICHARD EDMONDSON

Martians did not land in the middle of yesterday's big race here and Shergar was not in the field but otherwise everything else incredible happened in the Nunthorpe Stakes.

Just under 60 seconds of high Knave's theatre culminated in a dead-heat between Coastal Bluff, who ran almost the entire journey without the navigational aid of a bit in his mouth, and Ya Malak, whose jockey, Alex Greaves, became the first woman in Europe to capture a Group One race.

They don't give owl away easily in Yorkshire and following Les Eyr's victory in the Ebos on Wednesday this was a triumph for two yards separated by 10 miles in the James Her landscape of Thirsk.

The two camps are hardly on sugar-borrowing terms, however. Greaves made her name at Maunby House, the premises of Coastal Bluff's trainer, David Barron, and also the yard where her mother Val is the assistant trainer. The high point of the relationship was Amencable's 1991 Lincoln win, the low the day she took David Nicholls, Ya Malak's trainer, home for tea. Suddenly amenable did not seem the appropriate word. Greaves did not seem to think there would be a joint party last night.

This was the most populated Nunthorpe for 30 years with 15 runners and the realisation that it would also be outstandingly dramatic came moments after the stalls crashed open.

The grey monolith that is

Coastal Bluff unwound his long limbs unusually swiftly but as Kevin Darley made his first manual adjustments a ring in the gelding's bit snapped, leaving the metal of his bridle swinging uselessly under the muzzle. Darley was left as out of control as Eddie Irvine without a steering wheel (or Eddie with a steering wheel for that matter). "The horse jumped very well but I was frightened that he was that little bit keen early on," the jockey reported. "When I took hold of him to take him back, something just went. I heard something go ping."

Horses came either side and that helped me with the steering and while he was bang in there with a chance I wasn't going to give up on him. Thankfully he's got a long mane so I used that as best I could to keep my balance.

"It was a bit scary but out there the adenalin is flowing and my first thoughts were that he was still in the race and I wanted to get the job done. I didn't get scared until afterwards."

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Ibis
(Newmarket 3.05)
NB: Bollin Joanne
(Newmarket 3.35)

While Darley was performing his delicate gymnastics at 40mph, Greaves and Ya Malak crept ever closer. At the line York's photographic equipment was incapable of separating them, though Darley did separate himself from Coastal Bluff when it was expedient to do so.

The official photo-finish picture shows Coastal Bluff (far side) and Ya Malak sharing the spoils in yesterday's Nunthorpe Stakes. Averti is third and Cyrano's Lad fourth

It made Frankie Dettori's statistic dismount look rather tame. Ya Malak too had overcome the fates to claim his prize. The gelding was so sick with colic after his last run at Goodwood that his racing career, not to mention his life itself, was under threat. Now his name will go down in history as the transportation for his mould-breaking 29-year-old rider. "Today I think I've shown that if the animal is good enough then so am I," Greaves said.

Hubby made his name as the partner of Sobe and has exhibited in a short career that he is also a devil of a competitor as a trainer. David Nicholls is bald and craggy and hewn from the same seam as another dis-

tinctive Yorkshireman Brian Glover. He will tell you that during his time in the saddle he held no truck with women jockeys. Nicholls, though, is no longer a riding chauvinist, presumably because if he was he would no longer get his meals cooked or dirty washing cleaned.

Ya Malak showed what a good horse he is today and the jockey did the same," he said. "I don't have to tell anyone how good she is anymore. Everyone in England, Ireland and France can see how capable she is."

"She's philosophical and realises there are owners and trainers who will never put her up, but that's their problem. I'm just glad she rides my horses because she rides them very well."

His wife, Sophie, and he are the partners who will be the ones to benefit from the success of Ya Malak.

LEADING JOCKEYS Pat Eddery 43 wins from 222 rides gives a success ratio of 19.4%. J Reid 39 from 261 (14.1%); L Dettori 35 from 198 (17.7%); M Stynes 33 from 94 (24.5%).

LEADING TRAINERS WITH WINNERS E Hanson — 36 winners from 363 runners; a success ratio of 10.4%; P Cole 26 from 134 (19.3%); J Gosden 24 from 127 (18.7%); M Stynes 23 from 84 (28.5%).

BLINKED FIRST TIME Maunby (2-0); Sunbeam Dance (unraced, 3-0).

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS None.

LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS Flyer Brig (3.10) has been sent 410 miles by W Kemp from Durban, South Africa.

GOING Good to Firm (Firm in places). **STALLS** Straight course — stands side, round course — inside (except 1m-4f — outside). **DRAW ADVANTAGE** High odds for 71m-100m.

RECORDS G & N of Chelmsford between 1929 and 1935. Chichester station (London Victoria) 1 miles. **ADMISSION** Belmont Enclosure £10; Gordon Enclosure £10 (over £5.50 Public); Enclosure £5 (less £5.20). CAR PARKS 82%; free parking available.

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BLINKED FIRST TIME Maunby (2-0); Sunbeam Dance (unraced, 3-0).

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS None.

LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS Flyer Brig (3.10) has been sent 410 miles by W Kemp from Durban, South Africa.

GOING Good to Firm (Firm in places). **STALLS** Straight course — stands side, round course — inside (except 1m-4f — outside). **DRAW ADVANTAGE** High odds for 71m-100m.

RECORDS G & N of Chelmsford between 1929 and 1935. Chichester station (London Victoria) 1 miles. **ADMISSION** Belmont Enclosure £10; Gordon Enclosure £10 (over £5.50 Public); Enclosure £5 (less £5.20). CAR PARKS 82%; free parking available.

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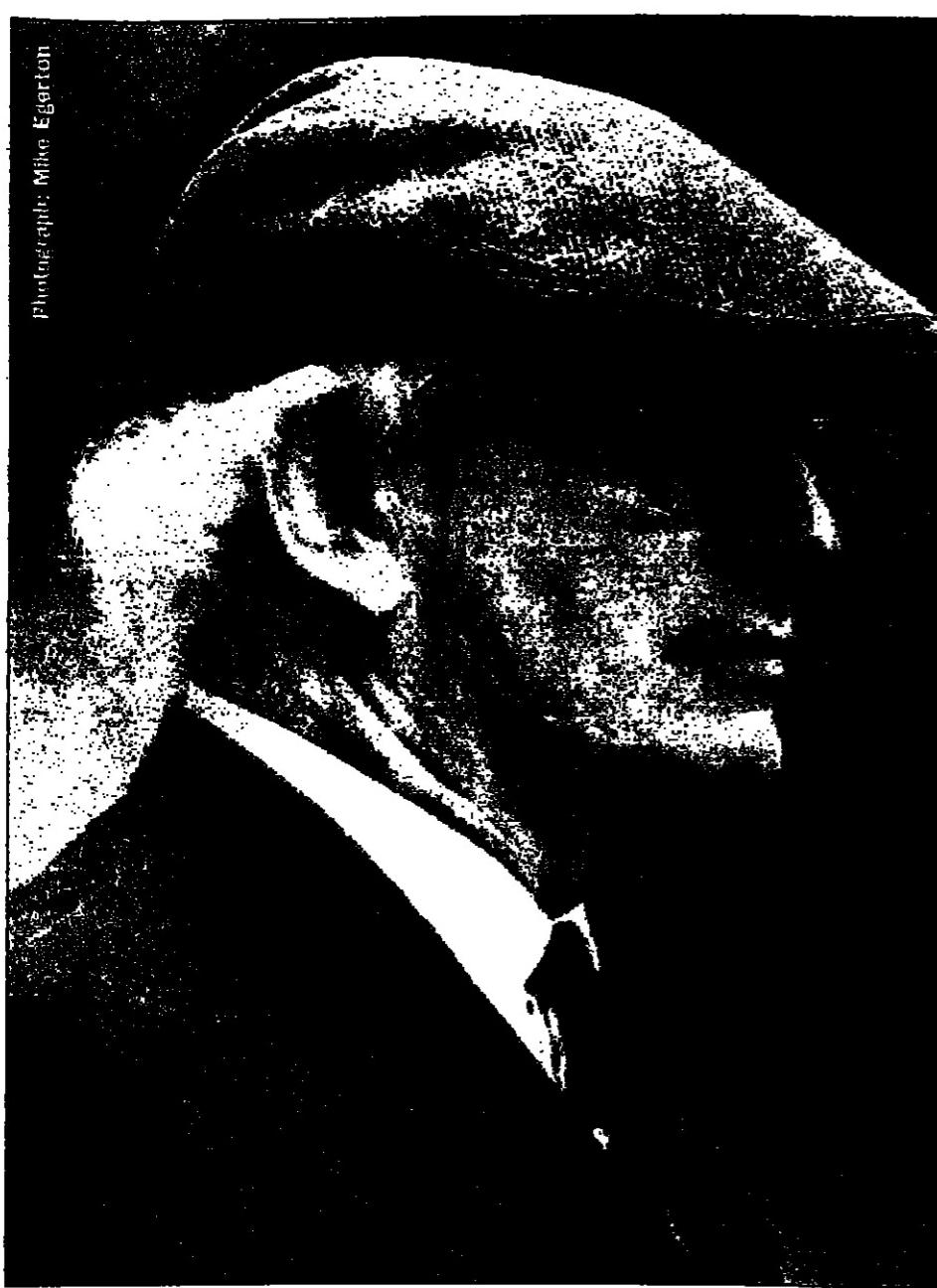
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Class act undone by parlour politics

Chris Hewett assesses the legacy of Jack Rowell, the coach who won the battle to restore England's rugby pride but lost the power game at Twickenham

Say what you like about Jack Rowell – and the most outspoken of his recent critics, Fran Cotton, did precisely that at the weekend in a now notorious public outburst – but as all successful businessmen know, the bottom line is the only thing that really counts. Rowell stayed well above that line in his three and a half years as England coach and his successor, whoever he may be, does half as well between now and the turn of the century, it will be some achievement.

It is a measure of Rowell's stature as a rugby figure that the Rugby Football Union are now likely to employ two men to fill a role he happily performed on his own – "I live Margaret Thatcher's hours," he once said, referring to his contemptuous disdain for regular sleeping habits – and a quick glance at a bulging credit column tells its own story. Thirteen league and cup trophies with Bath in a golden decade from 1984, supplemented by a Grand Slam, three Triple Crowns, a World Cup semi-final and 21 Test victories from 29 starts with England. Why, then, the dissatisfaction that undeniably circulated

around the highest echelons of the English game as Rowell cautiously but sensibly rebuilt his national team from the wreckage inflicted by Jonah Lomu on that crucifying afternoon in Cape Town in June 1995?

Why should the Cottons, Dick Bests, Geoff Cookes and Don Rutherford of this world have felt the need to undermine the efforts of a man whose commitment to his country's rugby fortunes could never have been questioned, not even by his most implacable enemy? After all, Rowell was and remains every bit as fanatically English as the most decorated of Twickenham's wing-commander population.

As is so often the case, strong personalities lay at the root of the problem. Rowell could be prickly, confrontational, challenging and waspish. He did not suffer fools gladly – indeed, he did not suffer them at all – and while he found it easy to do things his way in the small town environment of Bath, the parlour-game politics habitually played out at Twickenham were always likely to frustrate him. And frustrated he was; as recently as Monday afternoon he was professing genuine dis-

bief at the situation in which he found himself.

Not exactly one of life's natural diplomats, he quickly learned to curb his instincts and say the right thing in the right place. But, occasionally, he would drop his guard. During last season's Five Nations' Championship he let rip in a newspaper interview, damning his RFU persecutors in no uncertain terms. A year previously, he had turned the scatter-gum on the press, accusing his jour-

nalistic critics of undermining his status in the business community with their ill-informed and gratuitous comments.

More worryingly, his aggressive approach to sporting psychology left some senior members of the national playing squad cold to the point of frostbite. Phil de Grawville, his protégé with Bath and England, describes him as a "brilliant motivator and analyst of players' strengths and weaknesses", but privately, the likes of Will Car-

ling and Tim Rodber would ex-

press very different views.

There were errors of judgement on the selection front, too. Rowell was a year late in bringing De Glanville into his first-choice side and when he finally bit the bullet last season, he dropped the wrong person – Jeremy Guscott – to accommodate him. It was Carling who should have gone, but in the battle of the big egos, the glamour puss from Harlequins carried too much heavy artillery.

And what of Paul Hull, Eng-

land's best player in South Africa in 1994? Rowell handled the Bristol full-back with insensitivity, wrecked his fragile confidence and ultimately cost England the services of a brilliantly instinctive, attacking footballer. Ludicrously, he showed a similar lack of sympathetic acumen by snubbing Alex King, the brightly gifted young Wasp outside-half, in favour of Rob Andrew in Cardiff last season.

Another Lion, Scott Gibbs, has turned down a reported £30,000 offer to join the Allied Dunbar First Division club Northampton and will stay with Swans.

Squads for Wales game, Digest, page 27

Lions to tour Australia

The Lions will tour Australia in 2000 and 2008 and in return the Wallabies will make Grand Slam tours of Britain in 2000 and 2004.

The Lions will play two Tests in Australia in 2000 before travelling to New Zealand for two Tests against All Blacks. The Lions have not toured Australia since 1989 when they won the last two Tests to take the series 2-1.

Two Lions, Allan Bateman and Barry Williams, have agreed to play for Wales against Romania in Wrexham on 30 August and for their club, Richmond, against Saracens the

next day in an Allied Dunbar Premiership match.

They were the only two of six Welsh players at Richmond to make themselves available for international duty, although Scott and Craig Quinnell, John Davies and Andy Moore are all expected to play in the league match.

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Squads for Wales game, Digest, page 27

CRICKET SCOREBOARD

Britannic Assurance County Championship

Second day of four, 11.00 today

Durham win toss.

Derbyshire – First Innings

Overnight: 265 for 6

M J Foster not out

..... 54

M W Bettis c Johnson b Dutch

..... 14

Extras 107, wds, wic, 261, 1610

..... 30

Total (for 7, 100 overs)

321

Fall (cont'd): 7.30pm

No batsman batted, a wicket,

Derbyshire – Second Innings

Overnight: 226 for 6

J Allen c & b Dutch

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Bears
fight
drop

Hamilton puts hope in promising youth policy

Northern Ireland's World Cup qualifying campaign had gone awfully long before Wednesday night confirmed its failure, but there was cause for optimism in the aftermath of their 3-1 defeat by Germany.

That Northern Ireland were 18 minutes from defeating the European champions was impressive enough. The way they went about the match, and the potential 'on show', augured even better.

Northern Ireland's task bore comparison with the World Cup encounters between Wales and the Netherlands, but their execution was very different. While Wales attempted to take on the Dutch as if they were equals, the

Irish accepted they were facing superior players and concentrated on defending and counter-attacking. The players were disciplined and intelligent, sitting the Germans in midfield when they did not have the ball and breaking quickly when they did.

Most encouraging of all were the performances of the maturing Keith Gillespie and the 22-year-old Blackpool striker James Quinn. Gillespie played as an auxiliary right-back for much of the game but also had the confidence and energy to run at the Germans. Quinn formed a focal point of the attack in a manner beyond his status. He also produced a sublime pass for Michael Hughes' goal.

Popov gold as De Bruin misses out

Swimming

JAMES PARACK
reports from Seville

A dramatic victory and a dramatic defeat died for the main billing at the European Championships here yesterday. The Russian Alex Popov won his fourth consecutive European title in the 100 metres freestyle, while Ireland's Michelle De Bruin failed in her attempt to win a possible five gold medals when she finished second in the 400m freestyle.

Popov's victory marked an astonishing recovery from a staggering incident in Moscow a year ago which nearly took his life.

Leading from the first stroke, Popov gave an exhibition in freestyle swimming, finishing in a new championship record time of 49.09sec. With the World Championships just six months away, Popov signalled that he is still the man to beat.

The silver medal went to Sweden's Lars Forlander in 49.51 and the bronze to Oleg Rousklevitch, of Belarus, in 49.84.

"In the morning I was not sure my technique was there. So

many things were going wrong in only my second race this year," Popov said. "So I went to the warm-down pool and worked on some things and this afternoon it was like I was born again," he said.

Stabbed in August, he was back in the water in November. "My body was damaged but my soul wasn't," he said. "So the doctors fixed my body and off I go."

Popov's strength is his faultless technique which appears effortless. "The water is your friend," he said. "You don't have to fight it, you just share the same spirit with it and it will help you move."

His press conference was packed. When he was late for another appointment he politely said: "If you'll excuse me, I have to go." The respect he has for others makes him the most popular champion in the sport.

A surprise result in the first final of the evening saw De Bruin - the former Michelle Smith - beaten to gold by the German Dagmar Hase in a time of 49.52sec. The Irish woman finished in 4:10.50, with the bronze going to another German, Ker-

stin Kielgass, in 4:10.89. De Bruin led until the last 50 metres when Hase, the Olympic silver medallist, turned the tables on last year's Olympic champion.

"I'm in Atlantic form," De Bruin, who had already won the 400m individual medley and the 200m freestyle, said, "but the conditions here are terrible. It's too hot and humid."

De Bruin next races tomorrow in the 200m individual medley and on Sunday in the 400m butterfly, the two races she won at the 1995 European Championships.

The best British performance of the day came from the 18-year-old Sarah Price, who set a new British record in the heats of the 100m backstroke and should be pleased with a fifth place in the final. Britain's affair with fourth place continued as Adam Rickwood narrowly missed a medal in the 200m backstroke and the women's

high awareness of space and near skills. Surely they were representative teams? Apparently not, just schools sides and local youth club teams.

"We are pleased with the progress," Hamilton said. "It is a hungry area with many good young players. We have a lot of good coaches and have tried to involve all groups, such as schools and youth clubs, in playing mini-soccer. We have more youth internationals than ever before and more get-togethers. An under-21 team is the next step, when we solve the financial situation."

It was evident at half-time when four mixed teams of primary school age children played two small-sided games on the Windsor Park pitch. Both boys and girls showed unexpectedly

hoping for an easier group next time. That is another reason for seeking good results in the remaining World Cup games, against Albania in Zurich and in Portugal, as their Fifa ranking position (currently 71st) will influence their seeding.

The Irish are looking further ahead. Under Hamilton, the whole youth system has been overhauled with much of the work based on the successful Portuguese development system.

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Worthington and, until recently, Jimmy Quinn: "I'm delighted with that," Hamilton said. "That is very important. It is another sign that football in Northern Ireland is healthy and alive."

It seems to be prospering in Germany, too. With home matches against Portugal, Armenia and Albania to come, qualification seems certain. "They were impressively patient," Hamilton said, "and if you leave a little gap they will exploit it."

The Wales coach, Bobby Gould, was seething yesterday after comments made on BBC Wales by one of his predecessors in the Welsh job, Jim Toshack. Gould was upset at the tele-

vision commentary as his side lost 6-4 to Turkey in a World Cup qualifier in Istanbul on Wednesday, particularly Toshack's criticisms of the team, its tactics and of Gould himself. Toshack, manager of the Istanbul club Besiktas, was working at the match for BBC Wales as part of their commentary team.

Gould said yesterday: "I called the BBC at 9am and I'm still waiting for a reply from their head of sport."

Toshack, apparently responding to a comment by Ian Gwyn Hughes, the BBC Wales correspondent, that the Welsh defence did not seem to know what was going on, is reported to have said: "Neither does Bobby Gould."

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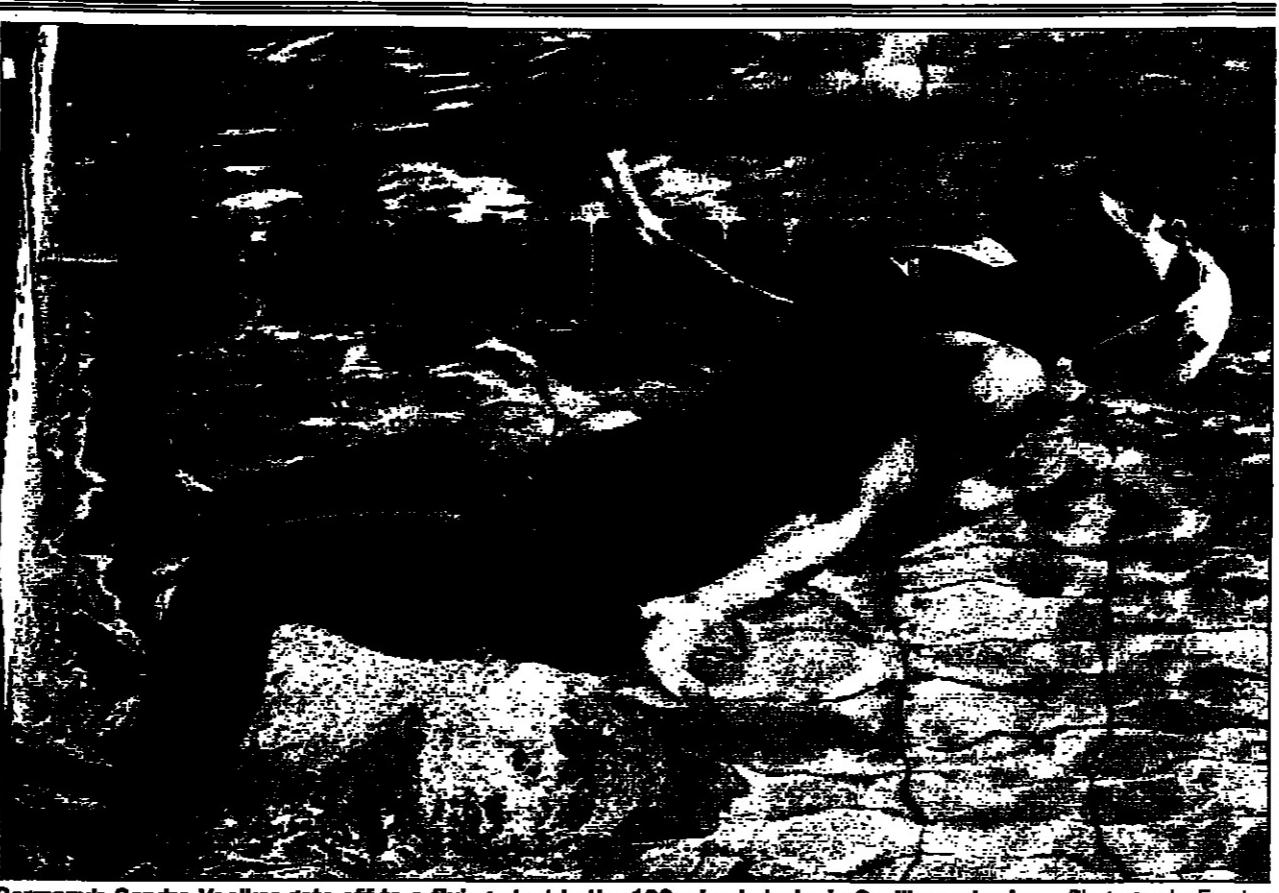
views last week, but had to cancel a press conference to reveal his identity because his current club were unhappy about releasing him from his contract without compensation. The Shots, who are desperate to complete their climb from the Icis Third Division to the Premier, hope to be able to solve this problem and name their man next week.

Chapple is not the only Icis manager linked with a switch to Aldershot. George Borg is unhappy that his budget at Emfield, last season's Premier Division runners-up, has been cut, and could be tempted by a fresh challenge.

Emfield may not be among the front-runners this term but Sutton United hope to be - they followed Saturday's 2-0 home win over Hitchin with a thumping 6-0 triumph at Purfleet on Monday. Gravesend and Northfleet and the Essex side, Heybridge Swifts, could also be challengers but, if Chapple stays at Kingstonian, they should be the favourites for the Icis title.

The UniBond League starts its season tomorrow with Altrincham, relegated from the Conference, against Barrow the pick of the fixtures.

Gresley Rovers, the Dr Martens League champions, have promoted Gary Birles, the former Nottingham Forest striker, to the fill the managerial vacancy created by Paul Fletcher's move to Southport.



Germany's Sandra Voelker gets off to a flying start in the 100m backstroke in Seville yesterday Photograph: Empics

Chapple faces up to challenge

Non-League notebook

RUPERT METCALF

Outside the GM Vauxhall Conference, the non-League club making the most news this summer have been Kingstonian, who persuaded Geoff Chapple to step down a level to the Icis League Premier Division after 13 seasons in charge of Woking.

Chapple has been spending freely as he attempts to build a Kingstonian side capable of joining Woking in the Conference. David Llewellyn, the former Tottenham and Oxford United striker, was bought from Rushden & Diamonds for £18,000 - a huge fee by Icis League standards - while the experienced pair of Terry Evans and Matt Crossley arrived from Wycombe Wanderers.

However, Chapple's stay at Kingstonian may be dramatically cut short. Despite his success last season at Woking, whom he steered to a third FA Umbro Trophy success in four years and to the third round of the FA Cup, he was linked with a move to the ambitious Icis First Division outfit, Aldershot Town. Since then the Shots have lost their manager, Steve Wigley, when he returned to his former club, Nottingham Forest, as youth-team coach soon after Chapple, who lives in Aldershot, joined Kingstonian.

Aldershot chose their new manager after concluding inter-

Hill coy on Formula One job prospects

Motor racing

DERICK ALLSOP
reports from Spa-Francorchamps

Damon Hill will not base his decision on which team he is to drive for next year on one race in the Arrows-Yamaha: his sterling drive to second place, and almost victory, in Hungary last time out. He admits he does not expect a similar performance in Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix here on this fast, spectacular circuit.

According to the grapevine, however, Hill may have burned

his boats with McLaren-Mercedes, his preferred option. It is understood the team offered him a retainer of \$2m (£1.26m) plus \$1m a win. Hill is thought to be seeking a \$10m deal and to have rejected the proposal.

That would appear to leave Jordan, the team he turned down this season, as the new favourites, with Prost and Sauber the other possibilities. He could stay put, but stresses that his decision would not be based on his last, successful drive in the Arrows-Yamaha. McLaren's David Coulthard, meanwhile, is linked

with Jordan and Stewart-Ford. One of the seats at Prost has been filled. Olivier Panis, who suffered double fractures of both legs in Canada two months ago, has been given a new two-year contract. Panis is early lead and Brown said: "We have to say it was a mistake on the part of Michael, me, the whole team."

Another rumour doing the rounds here is that the Americans could be recruiting Nigel Mansell again next season. The former Formula One and IndyCar champion is said to be interesting a number of teams

(see table, top four drivers)

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